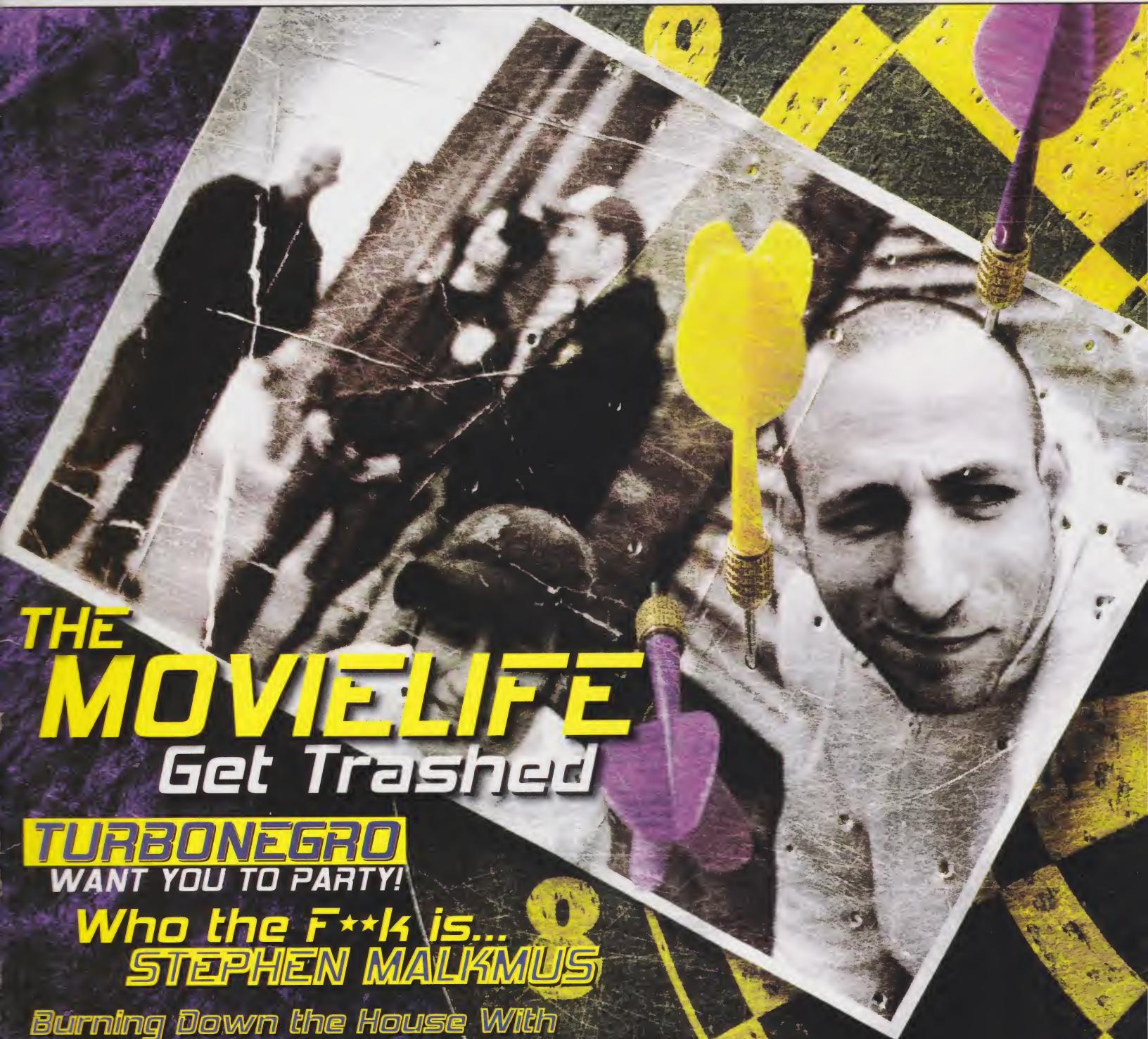


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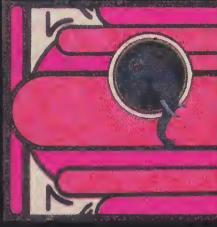
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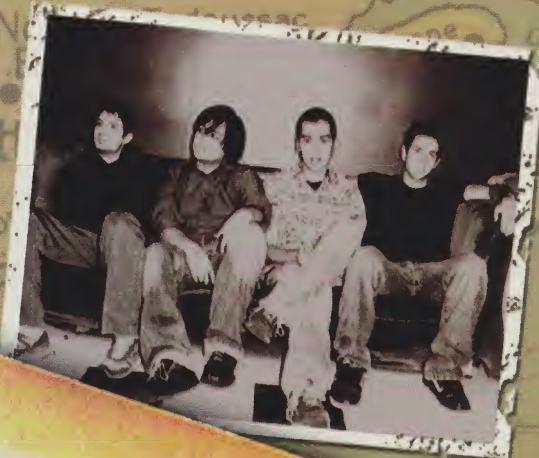


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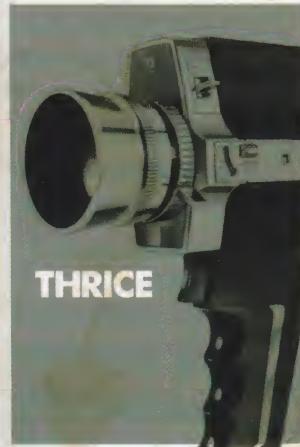
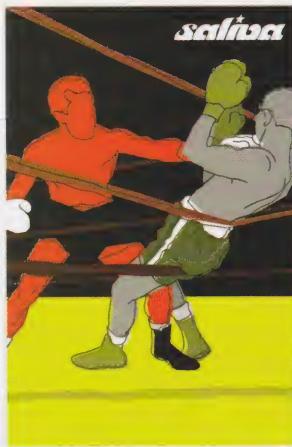
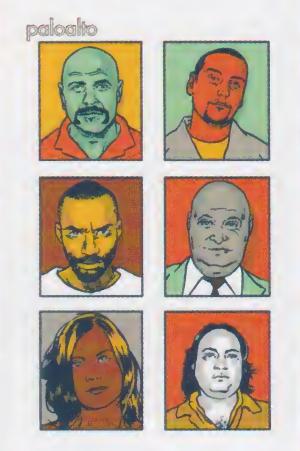
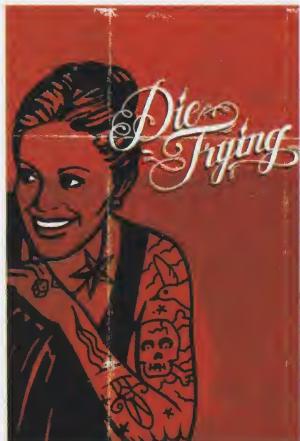
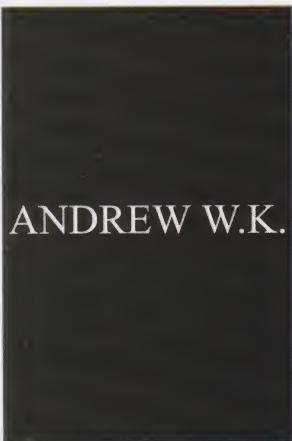
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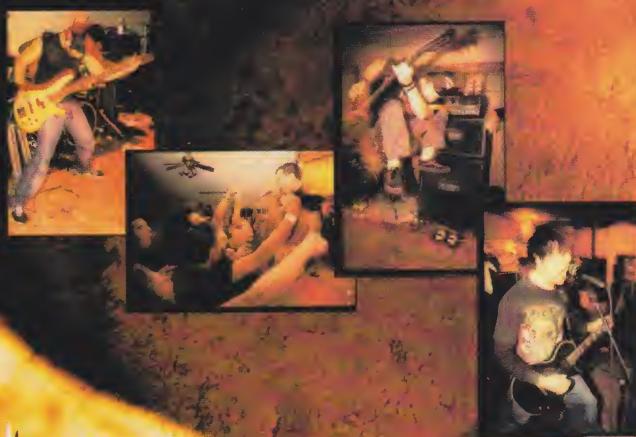
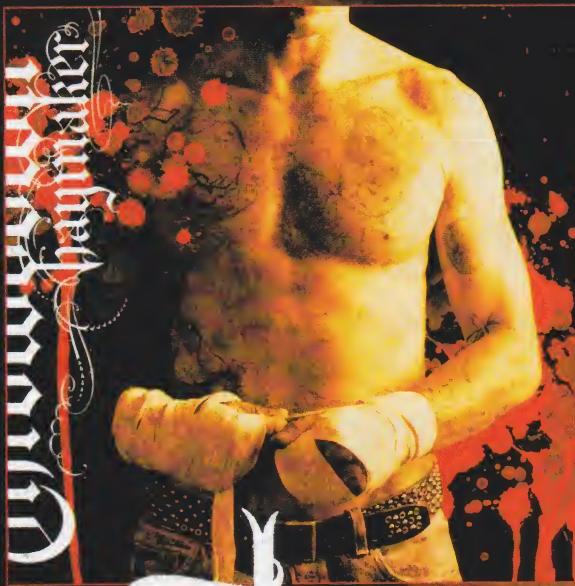


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Law of Inertia #13



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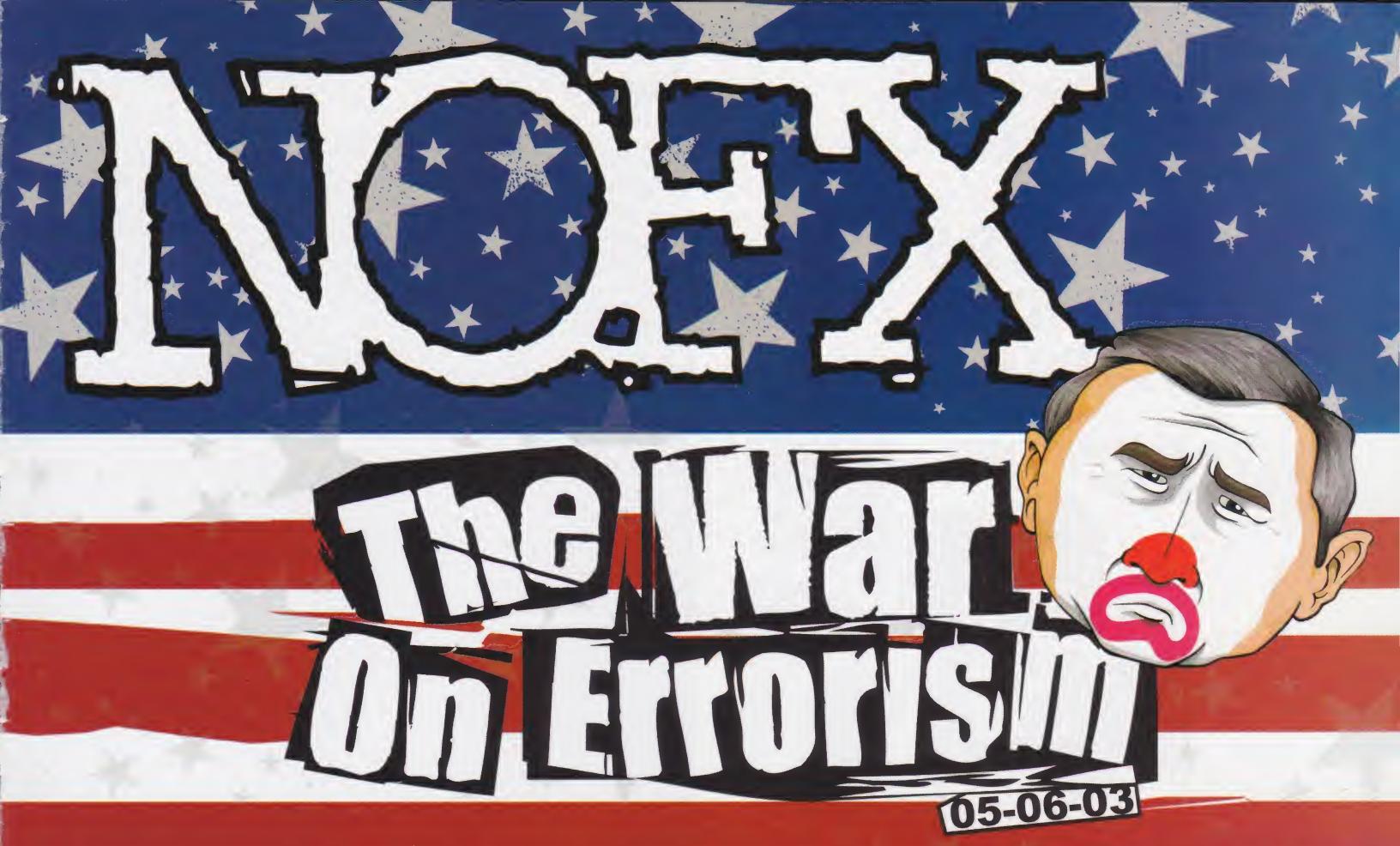
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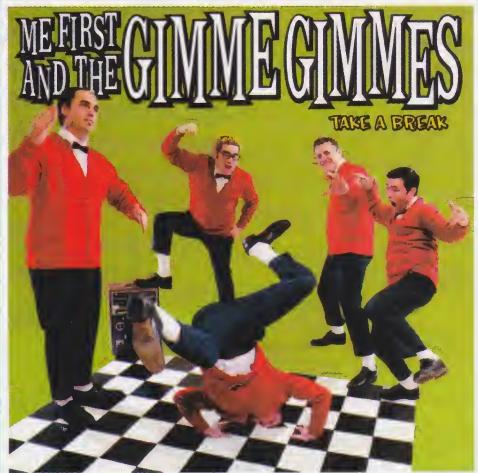


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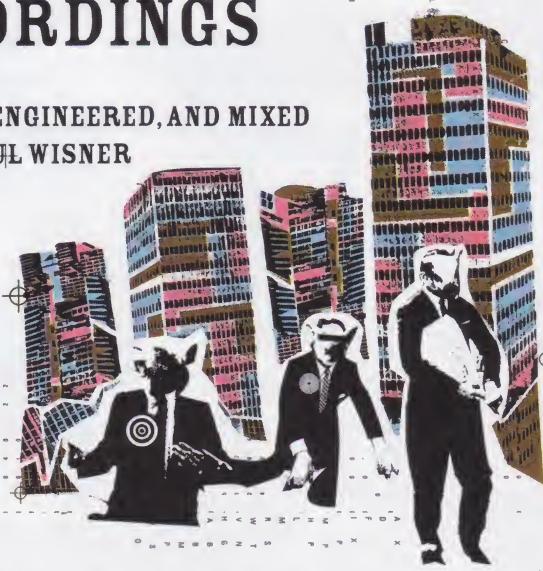
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LAW OF INERTIA

summer 2003

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> This issue is dedicated to the memory of Josh Huffman, 1984-2003 & Bijoux the dogg. Your memories will live on.



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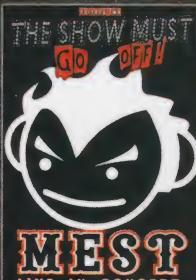
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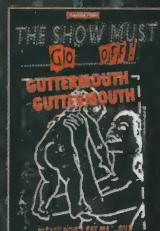
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Nick Powers: Contributing Writer

Nick spends his time teaching Senegalese farmers proper etiquette for being a football hooligan (Man U, baby!) and sampling the East Coast's finest Ethiopian food. In this issue he writes about Stephen Malkmus— his hero. Nick was starstruck.



Waleed Rashidi: Contributing Writer

Waleed comes to us from the furthest reaches of Southern California but his heritage is Afghani. Don't worry, though, if Wal is dropping any bombs, it's merely the phat beats that pour from his drum kit in bands like La Motta and It's Casual. He also is the editor in-chief of *Mean Street Magazine*, but we won't hold that against him. He regularly contributes to *Modern Drummer*, *Alternative Press*, *Rockpile*, and *Alarm*.



Dan Koplowitz: Contributing Writer

When not pitching the freshest indie tunes to nubile college radio programming hotties at his day job, Dan battles with *Law of Inertia*'s editor in-chief, Ross Siegel, for access to the phone line come dusk. They are roommates. Dan used to help run this rag you hold in your hands. But he decided he had enough and quickly moved to the greener pastures of the radio world where no one can tell that he has no fingers!



Leslie Van Stelten: Contributing Photographer

Leslie likes Skinny Puppy and Ministry, but that didn't stop her from taking some amazing shots of The Movielife for this issue. Her parents wanted her to be a doctor or a lawyer but Ms. Van Stelten is happily working the days away in Astoria, Queens without a JD or an MD or even a PhD. Leslie is a great person to eat Mexican food with, but what really makes her awesome is her love of goth fashion styles. I mean, there aren't too many goths left these days!



Dan Monick: Contributing Photographer

Mr. Monick, or The Monocle as he's known around here, was featured in issue 12's Focus section. His photography is really amazing and for this issue he gave us a bunch of photos of The Kills for your viewing pleasure. Dan used to play drums in Lifter Puller. He's also taken pictures for *URB*, *Anthem*, *Mass Appeal*, *XLR8R*, *Razorcake*, and *Thrasher*. He dreams of taking pictures for *Cat Fancy* too if he gets the chance.



The Goon: Contributing Writer

Although only two chromosomes away from winning a gold medal in the Special Olympics, The Goon has somehow coerced us into giving him a home on our review staff. Despite his lack of knowledge of any artists other than Fishbone, Living Colour, and Billy Joel, we love him anyway. He writes reviews for *Law of Inertia* because *Highlights* wouldn't accept his unabashed praise of Ipecac Records.



James "Beck" Quelle: Hired Muscle

Every hockey team has its "enforcer," the guy who has no skills but just comes out and fucks people up when the need arises. *Law of Inertia* feels the need to have our own enforcer. At roughly 4/5 the size of Shaquille O'neil, if anyone tries to fuck with our magazine, they will have to talk to Beck first. You can find him in this issue on page 58 writing about his would-be porn empire. He is also pictured on page 48 beating rednecks at the Daytona 500.

The other day I found myself at a quasi-bohemian poetry reading at a bar in downtown New York City. It was the type of thing the city's Greenwich Village is famous for— almost so stereotypical it was sickly sweet— a bunch of misanthropes, young and old, were there to read their poetry and fiction for a packed house of burned-out yuppies and punk rockers who resembled those of 1992 (complete with wallet-chains, baggy pants, pink hair, and cloves). The readings ranged from an older gentleman talking about how protective he was of his little brother when they were younger, to a guy in a wig screaming his head off in a manner William Burroughs surely would have admired, to a late-20s fellow reading what would prove to be the only worthwhile story of the night: the recounting of a near fight he had in Ann Arbor, Michigan some 15 years ago.

I sat there, sipping my beer with a few friends at a table crammed in a corner which seemed to be set behind the microphone, and I realized that I am pretty jaded at this point in my life. I'm not sure if I ever would have found sappy stories from bad writers endearing, but as I watched these men, all of whom were obviously tough and life-weary, open their hearts even a little for the entire room to see it made me glad to be alive. I don't think anyone in the room quite realized it, but what was amazing about this poetry reading, and others like it in coffee shops and bars around the world, was not the fact that these men were reading treatises they had slaved over for weeks. In all honesty, they probably scribbled them out a few hours beforehand. What was really magnificent about this night was that these grown men, some from well-known punk bands from the days of yore, were discussing what it felt like to have their older brothers' pick on them as kids, or have their girlfriends leave them, or have embarrassing moments with girls in front of hordes of their peers. Some of them realized they may be getting a bit too personal and quickly reverted to posturing with lines like, "don't get me wrong, I could probably hurt you if I wanted to," so as to remind the audience, "I may have feelings, but I'm not a sissy." And after sitting there in the corner it finally dawned on me exactly why this was important to the work I've been doing in this magazine for the past five years.

About 6 months ago, *Law of Inertia* was chastised by another magazine for not having enough "beer, sex, and sensationalism" in our pages. They argued that no one cared about the feelings and emotions that go into making music; or the blood, sweat, and tears that are spilled when doing something truly creative and personal and finally offering it to the world. I disagree, completely. I think that the world has enough *Maxims* and *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit issues. We have enough publications asking celebrities how much coke they snort off strippers backstage before a show. Why not make a magazine where musicians and artists and actors are portrayed in an intelligent, and even critical, light— in a forum that takes their art more seriously than their personality faults? Why not make a magazine for those of us who love art and culture— no matter how low-brow that culture may be— and try to discuss the ills of the world and the hardships artists have to face in order to do what they do? Sounds simple enough, right? The only problem is, I think more people would rather read *Maxim*'s editorials on what color underwear Britney Spears is wearing than watch a bunch of grown men, drunk with self-consciousness, be honest with the world for a change.

I promise you, whether you care or not, this magazine will be more honest and sincere, not to mention intelligent, than those others obsessed with hedonism. Hey, there's nothing wrong with pleasure, but sometimes the mind has to come first. Please enjoy the ride.

Sincerely Yours,
Ross Siegel, editor in-chief



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The Dumbest of the Dumb

Hey buddy!

We are the Dead Chrétien's, a punk band from Northern Ontario. We're a bunch of fuck-ups that have been playing music for too long, touring the Ontariable wasteland!

Anyhow we just released our new full length called *All Filler No Killer!* With all the original members (finally! after all that jail shit!). We want to talk about our new tour and another new live 7" (coming soon). If you guys could help me out we can send you pics, and some other things. We are still ghetto so we don't have a web page, or MP3 shit or none of that shit! We are real punks, not the new age internet punks! We need food!

Thanks for your intérêt!

Eat shit and die,

Othmer

Hey Othmer!

Wow, I don't even know where to start with this one, but that won't stop me from trying. Your band is called the Dead Chrétien's? Now, the *Law of Inertia* staff, having the best educations money can buy, knows that *Chrétien* is French for Christian... so that means your band is called the Dead Christian's? Othmer, that is the stupidest name for a band I've ever heard. To make matters worse, you're not even from Quebec, you're from Ontario (what "Ontariable" means I have no idea) so why the French in your name? Sounds to me like some sort of sleeper Quebecoise terrorist cell hiding in Ontariable Ontario with hopes of promoting Quebec's secession from Canada.

Moving right along, what a great name for an album! It's a bit too close to Sum 41's newest masterpiece, but that won't prevent you from conquering the fickle MTV pop market. You guys sure are on your way. It's a good thing all the original members are out of jail. What would the Dead Christians be without Gomer the drummer and Igpay the keyboard player? Good to hear the band is back together and out of the slammer. Now if you guys can just concentrate on promoting your band instead of getting drunk and writing potentially damning e-mails to awesome American music magazines. Also, I'm glad to hear that you are not "new age internet punks." The internet is so gauche! Then again, if you don't use the internet... how did you manage to e-mail this message to us?

Trust me, we have no interest in finding out.

Hip-Hop Hooray!

Peace,

This is Shay Kennedy and I represent the Orphan Fam and Kids Enterprises. I recently saw a copy of your magazine... props. I have an independent hip-hop label. I would like to forward a copy of the latest Orphan Fam release entitled *Up For Adoption* with beats and rhymes that range from conscious to commercial, e.g. The Fugees and Outkast, *Up For Adoption* is a classic. I would like to forward you a copy, please send me the proper mailing instructions. I look forward to hearing from you.

God Bless,
Shay Butta

Listen Shay Butta Kennedy,

I'm not sure how it is in the backwards land of hip-hop, but here in the boring world of indie rock we say "peace" as a farewell, not as a greeting. The correct way to greet someone be, "yo homey, what's up in your hiz-ow," and to bid them farewell, well, then you could say, "peace out my brutha." Don't slip up again.

Anyways, I'm not sure why the hell you would want to send us a CD by Orphan Fam. They're obviously good rappers (what the hell

"conscious" rapping is I have no idea. Plus, all rap seems to be commercial these days. Have you heard Ja-Rule? If that guy can sell a million records than so can anyone else) 'cause who else would have thought to do something totally genius like name their album *Up For Adoption*. Sheer genius! That is so clever! It's funny, you see, because you're a family of orphans yet you're up for adoption! Wait a second, that doesn't make sense at all. I think this project needs a bit more fleshing out before you make it to the level of other great rappers like Domino, Nate Dogg, Warren G, and Bushwick Bill.

Save your CD, Butta Man, don't send us a copy. We don't want it. I'm sure a cool rag like *Wassup Magazine* or even *Murder Dog* would love copies though. Much love!

America the Beautiful

Law of Inertia,

Great magazine. I picked up issue #12 on a whim in Victoria, B.C. while on vacation (I'm originally from Port Angeles, WA). I've been living in Germany for the last 4 years and I had lost touch with what is happening with independent music back in the states. I'm able to catch the occasional show by a band that is lucky enough to be on a label with some money for European touring every once in a while, but they are few and far between. Because of *Law of Inertia*, I now feel more aware of what is going on back in the states and I can't wait to get issue #13 (I just subscribed). Thanks to all of the *Law of Inertia* staff and contributors for putting out such a great publication.

I was able to catch a band that call themselves Ambrose and thought they were pretty good. I think they are German, but they sing their songs in perfect English. They might be worth checking out if you haven't heard of them already. Again, thanks for putting out such a high quality publication. You have definitely made my life a little more enjoyable.

Dave

Dave,

We love you and think you are great. You are the reason we do this magazine.

Cosmic Chaos

Law of Inertia,

Please contact CBS Evening News, John Blackstone's, to confirm I was videotaped regarding Bush and 12 galaxies of populations guiltied of war crimes. Please contact The Wave Magazine to verify I was published on January 1, 2003, with channel 5, CBS Evening Magazine, Mike Rowe, the host, with a photograph of my protest of a Sigmagonica Society, across populations at 65 Galaxies from the solar system. Please contact Karma Magazine to confirm I was published, January 2003, with a photograph of my Technitroniced Protest, of populations at 12 galaxies with Shattuck, guiltied of an impeachment, with treasons continuing against 130 galaxies across the solar system. And against the universe, 65 galaxies! And 120 galaxies! 17 galaxies to 13 galaxies! Please ask The Karma publishers to forward a copy of the article to my return address, or send the magazine and bill myself at the return address! I was identified published on the *Law of Inertia*, the 1st week of March 2003, please confirm it and send the article to my return address, or send the magazine and bill myself at the return address.

Please contact ABC news, channel 7, Brenda Berdette, and her cameraman, Stan, to confirm Stan photographed my Technitroniced Protest of populations 12 galaxies guiltied with Clinton's!

An appreciation! Thank you! Cordially,
Frank W. Chu

Dear Frank,

We are totally speechless.

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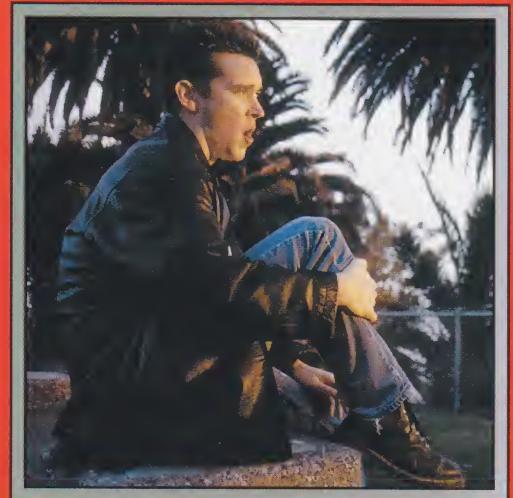
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B.W. GRADSKY, SUPERCOOP PRESENTS:

ASK B.W.

"Advice is for sheep, I give you the truth."



The man who once wrote this column is dead. In honor of his memory, I must tell you what happened....

In a padded white room with a view of mere dreams, delusions of grandeur were all that he had. His name was the same that my mother called me, but the rest of the world called him Internet Dad. Hey, that rhymes.

B.W. Gradsky (the other one, not me) was known as Internet Dad for many reasons, perhaps it was his inability to grasp the concept that cybersex is simply an act of masturbation in front of a computer, not a form of conceiving children. He was convinced that he had illegitimate internet babies all over the country, and made more than a point of uncovering the real identities of all women he cybered with.

The Feds called me in to track him down, seeing as how he liked to get violent when not allowed to see his child. It wasn't until I read his column in *Law of Inertia* that he left a sizeable enough clue for me to pinpoint his location. When I barged into his office, he held a gun to his Macintosh and threatened to shoot all of his children. I had no choice. I had to kill him. What can I say, the guy lived in a fantasy.

Me? I'm a cop. A supercop. There's no room for fantasy in my reality. There isn't even room for dessert.

See, a supercop has no time for nonsense. Your problem is a case, and I'm here to solve it. Shall we get started?

Wassup B.W.,

Here's the deal. I was drinking at this girl's place the other night with some friends and after a few too many, I had an episode of projectile vomiting, and needless to say, the rug on the floor is no more. Later that night, I woke up on a couch in the Bronx (it was a perfectly fine couch, I don't know why it was on the sidewalk) and couldn't remember if I had tried to hook up with her. My question is, after the vomiting, how soon is too soon to make a move? Should I just try to kick it like nothing happened or should I be aggressive in trying to tap that ass? After all I think that she was into me at the beginning of the night.

Hook a brother up with some tight advice, Damien,
The Bronx

Dear Damien,

It's nice to hear from a fellow ladies' man. Puke shmuke. You are a winner. How soon is too soon to get laid, you ask? Come on, Damien. You and I both know she wanted it. See, every taco wants sour cream. People may say, "Oh, they don't use sour cream in Mexico," but who cares? Are we

in Mexico? Cream the taco, Damien. Who does your vomit think it is to get in the way of Trojan Man?

On a more direct note, always try for the pooper. Often enough, drunken sex leads to a liquor baby. Nobody wants a liquor baby, Damien. Especially Don Juans like us. When you go for the pooper, you go for the gold. And if she doesn't catch the vibe, forget the snobby princess. She's high maintenance, and her pooper isn't good enough for you anyway. Just remember, if you do score, hold her for a few moments afterward. Women like to be held.

Dear B.W.,

I am a junior in high school, and last year I met the love of my life. Her name is Lisa, she is 5'7", has blond hair, blue eyes, and when it's just me and her together I can't think of anything better in the world. Sounds great and all, but there is still one problem, she's an alcoholic slut. I just don't get it. One minute she says she loves me and that we could spend the rest of our lives together, the next minute she's chugging Popov and hooking up with all of my friends. Off the top of my head she has already hooked up with Craig, Mono, Dougie, Stanople, and Santucci. I'm not sure if she hooked up with Looch, but the other night the chick 69'd my friend Jackal. And it's not like I'm getting any either, because I respect her too much plus I'm shy when it comes to her. So what should I do? I love the girl and I think she deserves another shot. My friends tell me that I should forget her and have the summer to myself, but I can't stop thinking about her.

Sincerely Lost,
Rockaway, New Jersey

Dear Sincerely Lost,

My friend, you are indeed "sincerely lost." Anyone who would 69 a person named Jackal has issues, but don't worry though. Supercop's here. In a nutshell, you have just told me that the problem is a 5'7", blonde-haired, blue-eyed, alcoholic slut. This description alone is that of a walking, talking solution. The only problem is you. This chick willingly exchanges fluids with Stanople and Santucci, and you *respect* her too much? The answer is right in your face.

Fuck her. And I don't mean it like, "forget her." Read up, watch movies, take a day out of your week and research the art of sex (*The Kama Sutra* and *"American Psycho"* would be my primary recommendations). You're a teenager, most of your "friends" who've plowed this dream lover of yours don't even know what the hell they're doing.

Be the guy who drives her crazy. Come out of your shy little shell and take her by the horns. After that, one of two things will happen: 1) You'll finally

see her for the self-pitying retard she is and get over this destructive obsession, or 2) You'll make her see that you're not only the nice guy, you're The Man.

No matter what, I regret to inform you that your girl is a filthy cretin. She needs a therapist, not a whipping boy. And, trust me, you'll meet plenty of other "special" blondes once you get the hell out of Jersey. But for now, she has your heart. Give her your manhood.

Dear B.W.

My friend James, a typical, clean-cut southern frat boy, has a penchant for Clinique make-up-bronzer, foundation and just a touch of mascara. Although a few of his friends are aware of his beauty ritual, he's embarrassed to have a girl stay the night (can't have anyone see him in the morning without his "face" on) or to spend the night at anyone's house (he'd have to bring his make-up bag with him, difficult to conceal at a bar). James refuses to give up his Clinique, but doesn't want to be labeled as a pretty-boy. As his friend, what should I tell him to do?

Is my friend gay?

Atlanta

Dear Gay,

As a supercop, it is my duty to encourage you to make a citizen's arrest. Your friend, a grown male who wears make-up and simultaneously resents the term "pretty boy," needs a serious dose of reality—and prison is as real as it gets. Even if his stay is only for a few hours, your buddy (we'll call him Boopie) will be thrown into a situation where he may literally be *praying* that nobody notices his makeup.

After Boopie is released, he might grow angry with you for arresting him. Don't worry. He will know that if he makes too much of a thing out of it, people will eventually hear the reason as to why you hauled him in. Boopie won't want a scandal, and will most likely quit his cosmetology habits.

What should you tell him, you ask? Tell him you're buying the drinks tonight at a place where there's a hot gal friend of yours who wants to meet him. That's how you get him in the car. Then drive his prissy ass to the local police precinct and sew the seeds of justice. Plant some weed on him too.

B.W. encourages you to not only write in with your own problems, but sum up the situations of your friends. You may find yourself able to be more blunt, honest, and to the point when writing about the problems of others, something B.W. Gradsky, Supercop, greatly appreciates when he feels the need to dispense his valuable advice. E-mail B.W. at askbw@lawofinertia.com.

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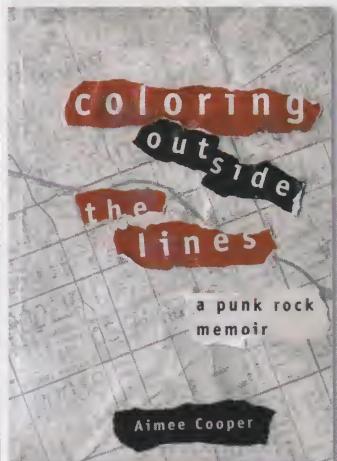
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Blood and Guts



The Blood Group

From: Staten Island, NY

Album: *Volunteers* (Le Grand Magistry)

Picture This: Portishead style trip-hop mixed with the digital noodling that's so common in New York City these days. At times dreamy and other times melodic like an indie rock band.



Bleeding Through

From: Orange County, CA

Album: *untitled* (at press time) (Trustkill)

Picture This: Ex-members of Eighteen Visions play brutal metal in the vein of At The Gates with, gasp, keyboards! Currently on tour with AFI.



The Bled

From: Tucson, AZ

Album: *Pass The Flask* (Fiddler)

Picture This: A band influenced by Converge, Refused, and Radiohead, The Bled have been making a name for themselves through their chaotic live shows and unrelenting intensity.



Blood Has Been Shed

From: Connecticut

Album: *Spirals* (Ferret Music)

Picture This: Technical metal core from a band that has been setting the east coast on fire. Vocals by Howard of Killswitch Engage!



terror

According to many veteran aficionados, hardcore is in a state of flux. For the most part, bands that were once fueled by political and musical passions have now been replaced by outfits more prone to rock-out than wax philosophically about the state of the world. The tried and true have witnessed fashion and glitter take precedence over debate and substance. Along with these topical changes, the actual sound of the genre has also progressed down a variety of different paths.

While these variations are not wholly negative, Bridge Nine's Terror is making a strong case for a slate cleaning sense of aesthetic revivalism. The group, comprised of ex-members of Buried Alive and Carry On, formed in response to recent events in the scene. According to front man and California transplant, Scott Vogel, "I saw that a

lot of the bigger bands didn't have much to say and they were getting away from the actual, traditional sound of hardcore. Things were moving in a direction I wasn't too happy with. But in the last year or so I've seen more bands playing more of a traditional sound and, maybe, having some lyrics that actually matter, and I don't mean I have to agree with them, but at least say something or try to do something with your lyrics in order to better people and better humanity."

The topical focus that Vogel speaks of resounds loudly throughout his outfit's Bridge Nine debut, *Lowest Of The Low*. Aside from showcasing a roots-oriented, streamlined sound—owing as much to Sick of It All as it does to Vogel's previous projects like Buried Alive and Despair—Terror's lyrical targets exist miles away from any sort of fashion focused pretense. *"Lowest Of The Low,*

to me, is about people who know exactly what they are doing," Vogel states. "There's people out there that make mistakes and step on people and use people, and it's pretty much separating from people who are doing it out of survival and doing it out of ignorance and they don't really know what they are doing, and that doesn't make them any better, but *Lowest Of The Low* is kind of about the ones that know exactly what they are doing, and take aim to use and abuse people for their own gain."

The forthright honesty that Vogel bestows echoes throughout every chord Terror strikes. While the band's brutal tenor vocals may not resonate with followers of recent trends, one can rest assured that the group remains committed to the ideological resurrection of this extreme musical art form. [Brian Peterson]



the scaries

The Scaries are one of the few bands playing emotional pop-punk today that are truly doing their own original thing and doing it as well or better than any other four piece rock outfit in the nation. Unusually bad luck has kept these upstarts below the musical radar of most punk fans outside the southeast but all that's about to change.

Hailing from the indie rock stronghold of Chapel Hill, North Carolina The Scaries have been around in some form or another for over 6 years. The band, brainchild of Mike Magarelli, played infrequently and without focus around the southeast for a few years. It was only with the addition of bassist Matt Tomich and lead guitarist Bill Fischer that the band has really taken its rightful place among the best active rock acts in America.

Ironically, their greatest asset may be that they play pop-punk, a tired style these days, in a more unique and fresh sound than almost any other band around. When asked if The Scaries are doing something different, singer Magarelli replies modestly, "We're older

than most punk bands, we grew up with different influences than others within the genre, so we have a different take on the whole thing. When I was growing up, punk rock was not popular."

Still, people have been catching on and recent tours with Small Brown Bike, The Casket Lottery, Against Me, and Gunmoll are bringing modest success to this band that is turning more and more heads by the day. And, now that their members have been freed of the burdens of side-projects, a greater audience may start noticing The Scaries. Plus, Lyle Collins recently replaced long time drummer, Matt Danser, and The Scaries' sound has never been more complete!

Fischer's raging guitars combined with Tomich's relentless basslines, Collins' tremendous drumming, and Magarelli's earnest and sincere high-pitched wail put The Scaries in a category all their own. Check out their new record *Souvenir*, out now. This music so comforting you'll want to wrap it around you like a blanket. [RS]

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BLACK IN BLACK



Black Eyes

From: Washington D.C.

Album: self-titled (Dischord)

Picture This: Equal parts Gang of Four, Washington DC Go-Go music, and Q And Not U. The band is an experience. Live they have two drummers, two bass players, and one guitarist. Prepare for unbridled chaos.



Black Cross

From: Louisville, KY

Album: Art Offensive (Equal Vision)

Picture This: Formerly known as Black Widows, this band is a veritable who's-who of Louisville hardcore. Drawing ex-members from By The Grace Of God and The National Acrobat, Black Cross is influenced by the Washington DC hardcore bands of the late '80's. This band is hot!



None More Black

From: Philadelphia, PA

Album: File Under Black (Fat Wreck)

Picture This: Jay from Kid Dynamite hooks up with fellow Philadelphia punkers to become the second Pennsylvania band to join the Fat Wreck roster. Expect Jay's usual growls but also find something that his former band lacked: melody!



Pitch Black

From: Oakland, CA

Album: self-titled (Revelation)

Picture This: These Bay Area Misfits-inspired rockers have ex-members of Nerve Agents, a blazing fast sound, and style seeping out of every pore.



the adventures of jet

After the Texas concept group Bobgoblin disbanded in 1999 because of the dual burden of maintaining a band and an idea, some members continued to work with one another under a new name and a new thought process. Their new moniker: The Adventures Of Jet, and their new frame of mind became more like a quest than a rigid set of rules. As singer, Hop, says, "To uphold the tenets of kick-ass rock 'n roll."

Uphold the tenets they do. With two releases under their belt and an ever-evolving orchestro new wave rock sound, The AOJ have created quite a buzz in their home base of Dallas. But, what's more, this year they have already played at South By Southwest and have been invited to play both International Pop Overthrow Festivals. Though their initial wide-scale recognition is because of their corporate roots, it isn't an

indication of who the band hopes to work with in their future. Having worked with a major label (MCA) while in Bobgoblin, most members of the band are well versed in the ways a major label will ignore a band that fails to quickly deliver a monetarily successful album and are unwilling to subject themselves to that experience again.

With those experiences in mind, members Hop Litzwire (vocals, keys), Tony Jannotta (guitar, bass), and Rob Avsharian (drums) are taking a truly DIY approach to The Adventures Of Jet. In other words, they have released their records on independents, the first, *Part 3: Coping With Insignificance* on My Records, and their latest, *Muscle*, on Suburban Home. Being a jack-of-all-trades, Hop recorded, wrote, mastered, and designed the art for *Muscle*, and is currently in the process of filming a

music video for their single.

The new album isn't a departure from the instantly catchy sound of the first recording. Rather, it is an evolution of pop music that is as intellectually stimulating as it is fun. Evidently still intrigued by the idea of concept art, the band uses *Muscle* to develop—through imagery of muscle cars—the notion that, "It is an empty feeling to think that the greatest of your days may be in the past, but the effort to hold on to them and the struggle to make them part of your future can be exhilarating, even if hopeless." That said, on a more basic level, the record is damn good pop reminiscent of The Cars' self-titled release. And AOJ is a great pop rock band we have all been waiting for since the supposed and ultimately disappointing "return of pop," a trend which you probably missed. [Courtney Kallas]



rise against

Some say that old-school hardcore as played in New York circa 1988 is dead and gone. People have told me that anthemic choruses full of sing-alongs and shout-out refrains are about as cool these days as leisure suits. Those people clearly have not been exposed to a rousing, pile-ons aplenty Rise Against show. The Chicago natives have a new record out on Fat Wreck Chords, an undying lust for touring, and some of the most inspired hardcore this side of Gorilla Biscuits.

Rise Against formed in January 2000 when bassist Joe Principe and the band's original guitarist hooked up with singer Tim McIlrath after meeting him at a Sick Of It All show. McIlrath, who also slays in The Killing Tree, Principe, and new guitarist Todd Mahoney (the band's third axe-man), finally settled on Brandon Barnes on the skins and the band was then complete.

Their brand of aggressive rock and roll has enough hooks in it to lure a blue whale into a mosh pit. Best of all, the band has a talent for coming up with fantastic

names for records. Their newest full-length, *Revolutions Per Minute* is rife with revolutionary idealism and might. Principe suggests: "[the album title] refers to a million bands throwing around the word 'revolution' when, in fact, they're not doing any sort of rebelling. It's kind of a play on words. We believe in revolution but not in the burning down buildings sense. We really feel, with the bullshit that went on with the last election that now is the time for a change."

Some have said that the band utilizes a good mix of At The Drive-In's aggression and Strike Anywhere's sloganizing. We think they're just awesome. Now, if you can just keep their name straight. When asked if anyone ever confuses Rise Against with the famous Black Flag song, "Rise Above," the band laughs and declares, "Yes, among those people would be Vinnie Stigma of Agnostic Front. We've actually been confused with Born Against before too." No one ever said hardcore kids were rocket scientists. But they sure do know how to whip a crowd into a frenzy. [RS]

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the militia group

Chad Pearson, Can you tell me a bit about how you started The Militia Group?

Sure. I moved to America in 1995—my parents were missionaries. I was raised in Papua New Guinea and moved up to Seattle in 1995 and I worked for Tooth and Nail up there. I decided I couldn't deal with that whole scene.

What whole scene would that be?

The Christian market. I have a few issues with that, and I myself being a Christian don't feel that it's right to sell rock based on your faith. That's a selling-out point for us if we ever tried to direct our music to the Christian market just 'cause we know it would sell. Anyway I moved down to LA in 1998 starting Militia as a booking agency and management company. I booked Slick Shoes and Dogwood, bands that were on Tooth and Nail. I got sick of that, I was going to tour manage for a band called Element 101 and I got a call from Rory [co-owner of TMG]. He said we should start a label. I told him I had two dollars in my pocket. He told me he had access to money and we should talk. So I uprooted and moved to LA from Jersey where I was living at the time.

The Militia Group's first release was Rufio's Perhaps, I Suppose, which was gigantic. Tell me about that.

Rory and I went through the beginnings of our label hoping to sell two thousand copies of each release. I had no experience running a label and Rory had helped out with a label called Rise that had put out some Juliana Theory and National Acrobat stuff. We didn't know what to expect. The great thing about that is that every little thing that happened at first was such a big deal, like when Revelation agreed to distribute the Rufio CD we were so psyched. We were nobodies and they picked us up, which is pretty amazing since I was working at The Gap at the time. So we got the records sent to my apartment and Rory's dorm room and the record came out and it sold 500 copies the first week. [laughter] We were like, "Uh, what just happened here?" We thought we'd sell that many in the first years. I thought I'd still be working part-time at The Gap. Thankfully, I'm not. [RS]



the hope conspiracy

In October of 1999, The Hope Conspiracy was born from the ashes of the late, great Harvest. While in Minnesota, Harvest (of which Jonas is the only remaining reaper in THC) realized that living in the Midwest made it difficult for them to grow a following. After meeting a guitarist from Chicago, they moved to Boston, hoping the proximity of venues on the East Coast would benefit them. They were right but it was not a smooth road.

From a hefty lawsuit to a new drummer to a personal connection with the war in Iraq, The Hope Conspiracy (featuring former members of Harvest and Piecemeal) have had a lot on their mind while they're screaming the lyrics to Endnote on their endless tour (they've played 200 shows since last July). After their tour with Boy Sets Fire and Vaux they take a summer road trip with Give Up The Ghost (formerly known as American Nightmare), Black Cross, Every Time I Die, and The Hope Conspiracy's favorite new band, Suicide File, before heading overseas.

Since they've started, there has only been one major mishap while on tour. According to Jonas, in April 2001, while playing a show in San Diego, "a kid supposedly got hit by the microphone. He got a split lip

and had hospital bills. All of a sudden we're getting letters saying they want to settle for \$50,000." Soon THC received papers informing them a formal lawsuit had been filed. In turn, the club was soon suing them in response to being sued by the kid. Problem was, says Jonas, "We [didn't] have any money." The drama continued to escalate, culminating in a letter Jonas received stating that judgement had been filed against him for 2 million dollars.

With the help of Equal Vision Records and a fantastic lawyer they settled the lawsuit. Just days before we spoke, Jonas got the letter stating that the case was closed. In the end, it cost the band two years of distractions and thousands of dollars.

During all of this, THC's drummer, Adam Patterson, left the band to join the military's Special Ops division. They recruited Ben Koller from Converge to tour with them and Jarrod Alexander from Suicide File to help them record their album. Jared Shavelson joined in May of 2002 after they tried out eight drummers who Jonas says were,

"mostly really terrible but said they were really good. There were a couple of guys who tried out who I wouldn't be surprised if it was their first time playing drums." But after they played six songs with Shavelson, they asked

him to accompany them on tour. "It was just such a relief to be playing with someone who could play the songs."

Although they love Shavelson, The Hope Conspiracy has their thoughts with Patterson who is stationed in Iraq. For Jonas and the rest of THC their feelings regarding the Iraq war are incredibly conflicted. "I can't say wholeheartedly I support this war. I can't say that at all. But being that someone I'm so close to is involved with it at such a deep level I have a hard time being completely opposed to it. But I don't want it to seem like I'm not into protests or support or [I'm] fucking pussy." At press time, they were on tour with Boy Sets Fire, a band adamantly against the war. Although their beliefs differ on the issue, Jonas says, "It's not difficult being on tour with them and I'm glad we can be on a tour with a band that has some thoughts about something."

While they tour the globe, The Hope Conspiracy hopes that Patterson will return safely, and these thoughts will probably find their way into Kevin Baker's lyrics on the album they plan to record this winter. But as Jonas says, "We're not a band that's about political activism. We're just a band about living our life." [Rebecca Swanner]



mastodon

"We play a big, heavy, lumbering, mammoth sound, and this primordial, brutal, and heavy prehistoric beast was the first thing that came to mind," says Mastodon drummer Brann Dailor referring to his band's name—shared with that of an extinct woolly elephant. The analogy happens to be perfect. Hailed by critics as "the second coming of Metallica and Rush combined," Mastodon have quickly solidified their place atop the heap of today's new (not nu) metal bands that have made

their label, Relapse Records, renowned as a metal institution to be reckoned with.

After serving time in Today Is The Day, Dailor and guitarist Bill Kelliher relocated from upstate New York to that hotbed of heavy metal, Atlanta, GA. After hooking up with ex-Social Infestation members Troy Sanders and Brent Hines, Mastodon wasted no time in filling opening spots for outfits as diverse as Queens of the Stone Age, Clutch, and Morbid Angel. They promptly earned themselves a reputation as metal gods.

Their debut full length, *Remission*, showcases their unique blend of guitars as thick as molasses, throat-shredding

vocals, and drum fills so fast they seem to be fills within fills within fills. Songs like "March of the Fire Ants" and "Workhorse," assault listeners with bludgeoning chaos. Even more notable is the band's live show, Mastodon have been tearing apart clubs all across the states, Europe and even as far as Japan. For those of you wondering who would win in a fight between the Elephant Man, a film Mastodon regularly samples in their music, and Rocky from the Cher classic, *Mask*, Dailor offers: "I think I'd have to put my money on the Elephant Man. Although Rocky might have Cher and the biker gang backing Rocky up." [AL]

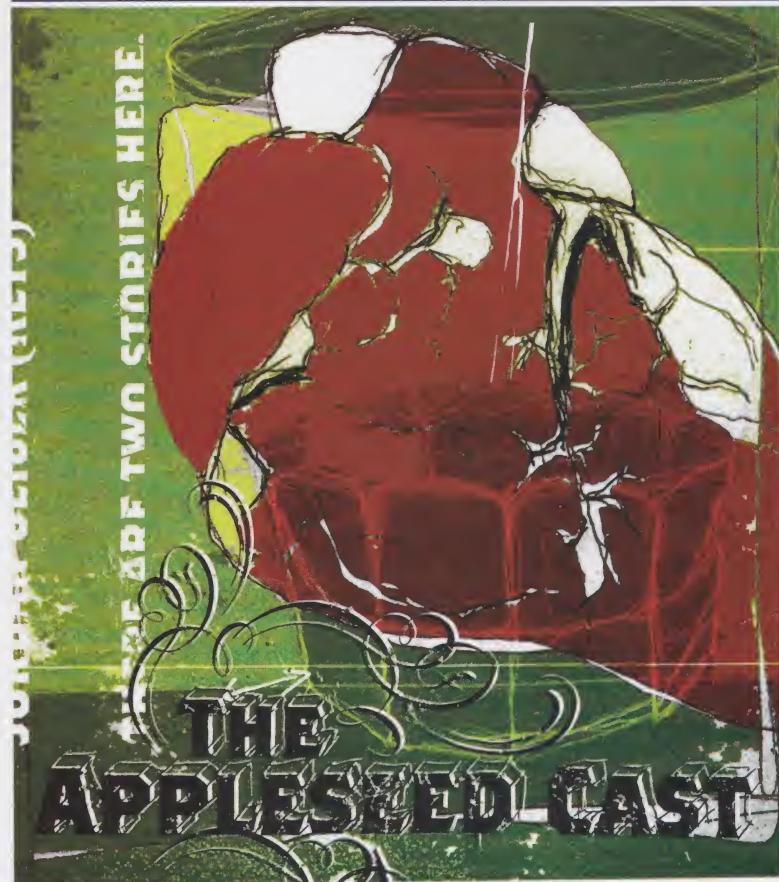
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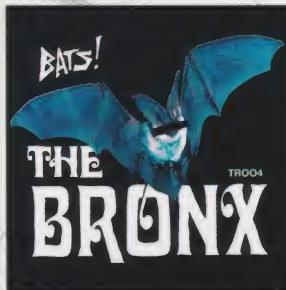
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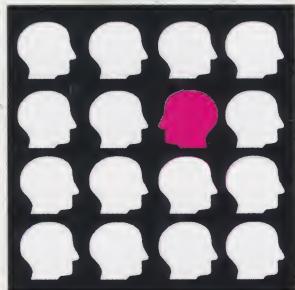
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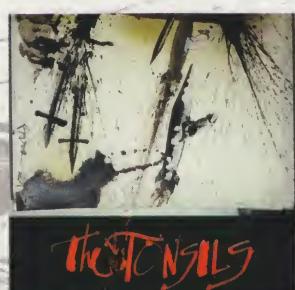
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BREAKING PANGAEA

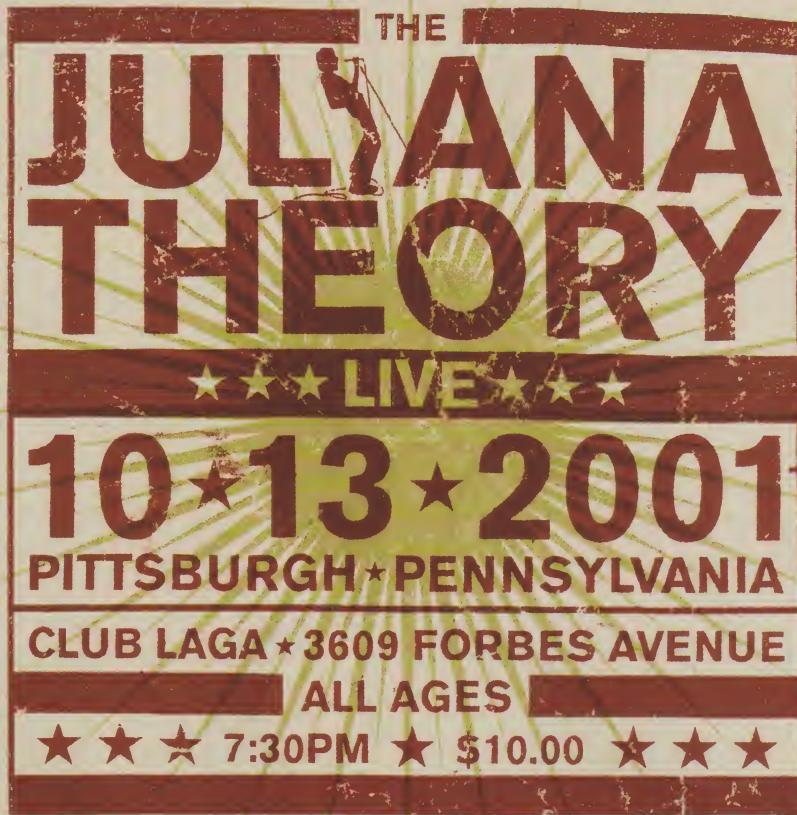
Breaking Pangaea could quite possibly be the best band you're not listening to and it just might be *your* fault. So many people have looked up the band under the wrong spelling that search engines have purchased the misspelled sites. "I [just] had to pick a name like that," front man Fred Mascherino joked during a recent phone interview. "We even thought about changing our name to the wrong spelling, but the search engines won't let us have the [misspelled] site back anyway. It's frustrating."

So why should you care about this Philadelphia trio? Because over the last three years they have proven to be one of the most cultivated units to come out of the East. Fred credits his degree in jazz guitar from Temple University for his big, polished chords, which he said distinguishes Breaking Pangaea from other rock trios. "I learned encyclopedias about the guitar from college," Fred said. "There were many times it was so hard I wanted to quit, but the fact that I forced myself to play, and learn that style— and learn it good— made me so much better at this style of music. I play a lot more layers on guitar than I would have before my training, where I would just be playing power chords. A lot of people say we sound bigger than a three-piece, and I think that's due to jazz chords."

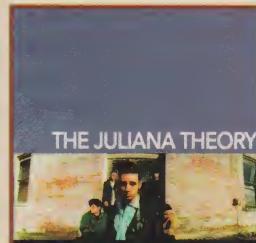
While Fred tended to wander into slower, melodic chords on the band's first LP, *Cannon to a Whisper* (Undecided Records), the band's latest release, *Phoenix* (Equal Vision), goes in a different direction. "It's kind of all cannon, less whisper," he said. "There will be a lot more people hearing this record, so we thought the best thing for us would be to do what we do best live, which is the heavy, rockin' stuff. We went pretty heavy on the guitars too, which I think was missing from *Cannon to a Whisper*."

Finding a sound he was comfortable playing all the time was an important goal for Fred. But nothing has impacted his career, or his life, as much as the birth of his one year-old daughter. "It's hurried me along a little bit in the respect that my goal is to be able to play music and live. Our band can finally tour. We have a booking agent and we can go out year-round if we wanted. As long as people are coming out to the shows, then I can live the dream. This just makes it that I have to do a little bit better because someone is depending on me. I guess we're trying to be a little more business-like. It's not that we want to be the next Pearl Jam— although I wouldn't mind being the next Van Halen."

Fatherhood has also forced Fred to become more concerned with the state of the world, and how the decisions made by our leaders today will affect the future of someone he is responsible for. "It becomes pretty scary," he said. "My wife was pregnant right when September 11th happened and I was on tour in Chicago. It was the beginning of a five-week tour, and it was pretty horrible because you think, 'Oh man, I'm bringing a kid into *this* world with all this going on.' It's a scary thing to think about if this were to evolve beyond Iraq, to a lot of countries against us and last a long time. I think about those things constantly now that I have a kid. You think about how you grew up. I grew up without wars and without any worry of war either. We always thought a nuclear bomb would come from Russia, but it really wasn't that scary. I guess you just don't want your kid to be worse off than you were. Your animal instinct is to protect, so you think, 'If this gets worse, I'm gonna take the baby and run to the northern tip of Canada.'"



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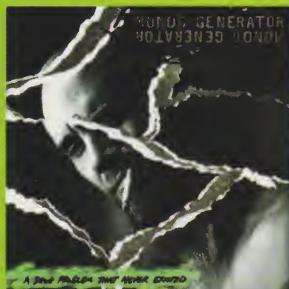
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EL GUAPO

I hate tofu. Now, I consider myself a food connoisseur, eating everything from pizza to fish custard. But if I had to pick one food that makes my stomach turn it would be tofu. So when El Guapo invited me to meet them at Kate's Corner, a vegetarian/vegan restaurant in New York's East Village, I agreed but wasn't looking forward to the lunch menu.

El Guapo released *Fake French*, their second album on Dischord, this May. Much catchier than *Super/System*, the entire album was recorded in drummer Justin Moyer (the vegan responsible for our trip to Kate's parents' house outside Philadelphia. The band, which began in 1996 at Wesleyan University, translates their Spanish name as "handsome

tough guy" or "ladies man," although guitarist Rafael Cohen, says that they "don't think of [them]selves as particularly tough, handsome, or ladies' men."

Although they do enjoy recording, touring seems most important to El Guapo. Averaging one show every three days last year, their live sets are a grandiose collection of noise and catchy electro beats played by Pete Cafarella, Rafael Cohen, and Moyer, who has made an effort to be more than just "the drummer." Moyer says, "Sometimes to our detriment I try to set up close to the front of the stage and crowd everyone out." As he drums standing and whacks himself in the head with his sticks he certainly is a part of the performance, if not a less depressed, modern day version of the

late Ian Curtis.

Why do they tour so often? Cafarella quips, "That's a conversation we've had a lot in the van. 'Money? Play shows? Get our name out?' There's no easy answer. I think the more you hang out and play music together the more of a band you are." Whereas Cohen interjects, "I don't really like touring. I'm more the 'be home and watch Seinfeld guy'. I don't buy into the romance of traveling and getting it out and being tough and sleeping on dirty floors."

Either way, they're one of the better bands I've seen (and heard) in the last year and I'm looking forward to the next time I get to watch Cafarella jam on his accordion. In the meantime, they've gotten me addicted to Kate's tofu buffalo wings. Who knew? □



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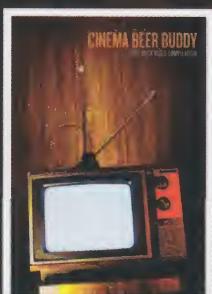
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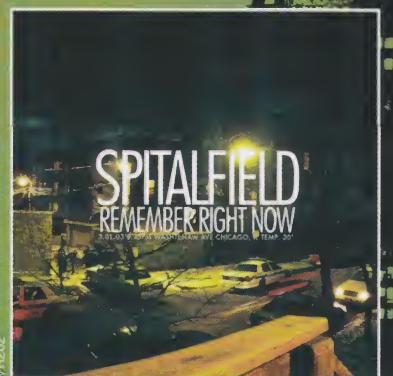
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PINBACK

This San Diego group has become a force to be reckoned with. In just five years Pinback has been a point-of-reference for journalists, aspiring bands, and fans' conversations about music. With their first self-titled album, Pinback brought intelligent songs with electronic elements to the forefront of independent rock. Simply put, Pinback plays some of the most reserved, cerebral, and intimate music you've ever heard.

Primarily made up of Zach (aka Armistead Burwell Smith IV), formerly of the criminally underrated 3-Mile Pilot, and Rob Crow of Thingy and Heavy Vegetable, Pinback started off as a part-time studio experiment. It was only after three official shows a fourteen-song album was completed that Portland label, Tim/Kerr, noticed the band's potential and signed them. During a Tim/Kerr label showcase at the North by Northwest music festival, a label bidding war ensued. But, this sudden interest in Pinback caused more woe than what you would expect. Due to contractual issues, their record was held in limbo for close to a year. When disputes finally worked themselves out, Pinback's ethereal self-titled debut was released on Ace Fu Records in 1999 to critical acclaim.

A couple of singles followed as well as a rare live disc. The next year their *Some Voices* EP was released. This added a more subdued dimension to their trance-like sound. Lo-fi, short, and sweet the EP threw those who thought they knew what to expect from the next Pinback release for a loop.

Blue Screen Life, the band's sophomore

full-length showcased a more focused Pinback. The songs were rich with melody, and showed a maturity most bands find much later in their careers. Although the "emo" tag is constantly thrown their way, this record shows the band is far more interesting and complex than most others lumped into the category. *Blue Screen Life* shows increasingly strong musicality and clever songwriting that makes jaws drop time and time again. Comparisons to Built To Spill and Elliott Smith begin to arise, though their musical arrangements pointed towards something even more introspective than their counterparts. This summer sees Pinback's second EP titled *Offcell* released by Absolutely Kosher/Tough and Go.

A quick Q & A session with Pinback's Rob Crow went down recently:

Do you feel that there is an evolution from *Blue Screen Life* to these upcoming releases?

To me, all of our songs sound different.

What is your live line-up like vs. your songwriting set up of just two people?

When we write, it's just Zach and I. Sometimes we have Tom [Zinser] play some drum parts. When we play live, it's anywhere from a three to five piece and we do a lot of instrument switching.

How did your most recent US tour go? I was at the show in Brooklyn and it was so packed I couldn't breathe or even see the stage—did you experience a lot of this throughout this tour?

We usually do pretty well, definitely better than I've been accepted before. Probably won't last.

What is the most difficult thing about doing Pinback?

Takes us forever to finish a recording because we fret over every little detail. And then sometimes outside forces can still somehow mess things up. So, what is the most natural thing the band does regularly?

Eating lunch.

What are some bands that you've been compared to, and do you think that is valid?

Usually Modest Mouse or Radiohead, which is strange because neither of us listen to or even like either of those bands. We're also pretty darn sure we don't sound anything like them. People just think "somewhat popular indie band" and lump us in.

You have had some other projects (Thingy, Optiganally Yours). Are they still active projects? Are there any other projects in the works? If so, how do you balance duties between that and Pinback? Do you consider the other's side projects and Pinback your main priority?

I'm working on the last Thingy record, then it will change into Advertising. I've got a new solo record coming out in a few weeks. I've been playing in a new power violence band called Alpha Males lately. Pea Hicks and I have been working on the newest Optiganally Yours record. I've also been recording a CD of another new project of mine, which is a dark metal band called Goblin Cock.

Lastly, what do you think motivates you to play music?

It's just what I do. ☐

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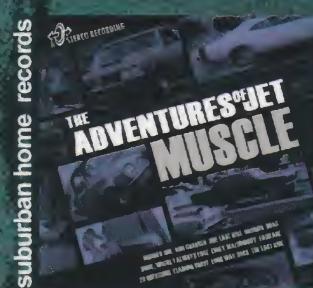
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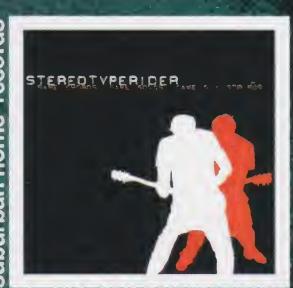
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PARTY OF HELICOPTERS



Toss in Party of Helicopters' latest disc, *Please Believe It*, hit play and before the fourth measure of the first track, "The Good Punk," is complete, you're already confronted with the lyric, "This ain't punk rock enough for my ears, I'm outta here." Now, without deconstructing the album's ten songs into some refined particle, let's note that vocalist Joe Dennis provides that pivotal line as a dosage of foreshadowing, slyly alerting the listener for what lies ahead. And who the fuck knows, perhaps it's the Party of Helicopters themselves who have unknowingly set the threshold of what is punk and what isn't. Whatever the case and the genre ties might be, *Please Believe It* is just the latest in the long streak of musical manifestos the eastern Ohio-based quartet has been churning out since its inception in 1995, each garnering rousing critical acclaim from both independent and major musical press outlets. Hey, at least someone gets it.

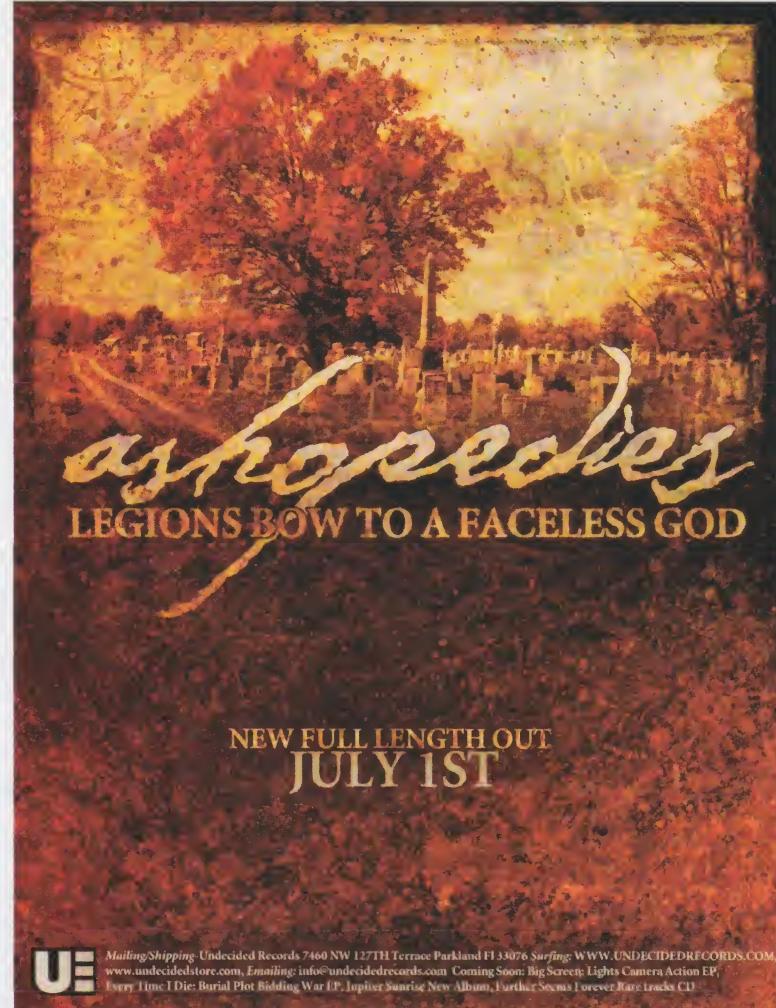
Fast-forward to March 2003 and it's mid-morning in Austin, Texas when the Party of Helicopters quartet (plus a non-intrusive pair acting as a film crew) arrives for their in-person interview. And on the whole, they're remarkably sprightly and halfway chipper, given the fact that the group had just showcased on a good faith red-eyed time slot earlier that morning on behalf of Velocette Records for the South By Southwest music convention. Although they've arrived for the interview quite punctually, their night before was anything but on track. "We were initially supposed to play earlier in the evening, around eight or something," starts bassist

Ryan Brannon on the snafu they'd encountered, "but we wound up switching with Jucifer because they're on our label and they were supposed to play at 1:15 a.m. They needed someone to switch with because of an equipment issue. Now, by the time 1:15 came around, the other band was still up there jamming and so, by the time we got up there, I looked at the clock and it was almost 2." Even for an all-night party like South By Southwest, 2:00 am is hardly premium positioning, with most of the industry attendees either stammering back to their hotel rooms half-conscious or being lured into some ill-fated Jägermeister guzzling expense account-sponsored open-bar gagging shindig.

Yet, despite the madness, despite the waiting game, despite the inconvenience, Party of Helicopters not only managed to swing another ravaging, lusciously-chaotic set of zig-zagged guitar riffs of guitarist Jamie Stillman intertwined with the busy, shuffling rudiments of drummer Cory Race and bassist Brannon. They even managed to hold a number of showgoers' attention spans at bay for just long enough to start taking notice—an accomplishment that's just below impossible at silly industry conventions. "The people who stuck around were definitely into it, which was nice," Brannon says. "I noticed that a lot of bands were playing to large crowds of people who seemed semi-interested. Our crowd wasn't as big, but the people who were there watching were definitely into it." And that's not uncommon—Party of Helicopters' music is

unequivocally either hot or cold to the independent rock fan base at large. Those who can't grasp the band's fusion of early SST Records-era experimentalism bred with the wanky, washy feel of Servedriver—let's just blur out the phrase "a majority," for posterity's sake—will instantly tune out; the slim remainder of the more discriminating type foam at the mouth for Dennis' shambled-by-design vocal melodies. And the rabid fanbase hasn't gone undetected by the band, who have also been able to observe their popularity from a more localized perspective as of late.

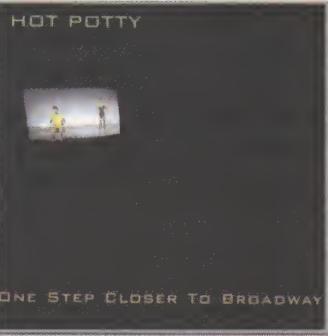
"We've been a band for so long, it goes in waves," says Stillman about the Party's party-goers. "Sometimes just a few people show up, but lately, it's been awesome." Party Of Helicopters, formerly occupying the Troublemaker Unlimited roster, is actually the first signing to Velocette label (formerly known as Capricorn) and were approached by the company after a performance at another music festival nearly a year ago—this one's on a vastly smaller scale—in Harrisonburg, Virginia dubbed MacRock. "[Velocette] offered us more than anyone's ever offered to do for us," Brannon says. "Plus, I read their history, with all the Southern rock stuff that they've done, and I was thinking that's just cool," adds Stillman. Not only is Southern rock just cool, but Stillman also chimes in his punk rock purity standards for good measure—with results that may surprise. "Well, Southern rock is more punk rock than punk rock anyways." Perhaps that's punk rock enough for some ears. □



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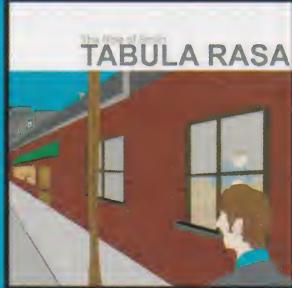
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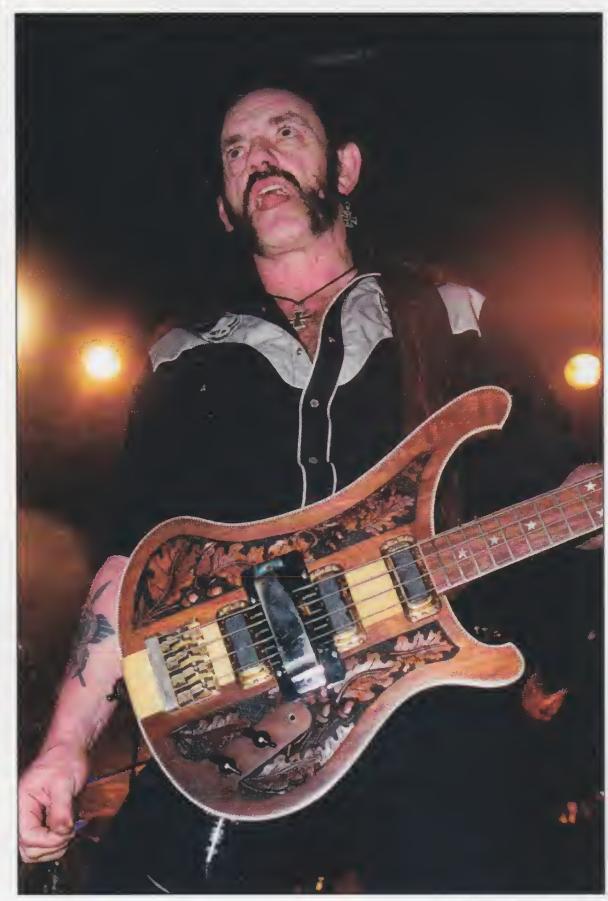
FOCUS: JERRY GUZMAN

by Celeste Tabora



Profile: Bay Area resident Jerry Guzman began photographing bands around ten years ago. His interest in the photographic arts began when he saw the work of Murray Bowles and Kent McClard. He decided to purchase a camera and try it out for himself. In the early '90s Jerry self-published a couple of photozines called *Picture This* and *Kwjjib* that he gave out for free at shows. Though he has since ceased production on his own zines, he continues to contribute to others. The bands he shoots range from Unearth to Shonen Knife (which happen to be his favorites) to One Man Army, Living Sacrifice, and Joy Electric. He's had many of his photographs showcased in various publications such as *Giant Robot*, *Flipside*, *Alternative Press*, and *Metal Maniacs*, as well as many websites and CDs. Currently he is shooting for Benton/Sister Records, and partaking in other photographic projects like the upcoming *Hang On The Box* CD, and *Inspid* Productions website.

Jerry can be reached by going to his website: www.jerryguzman.com



Motorhead



Give Up The Ghost



Tegan & Sara





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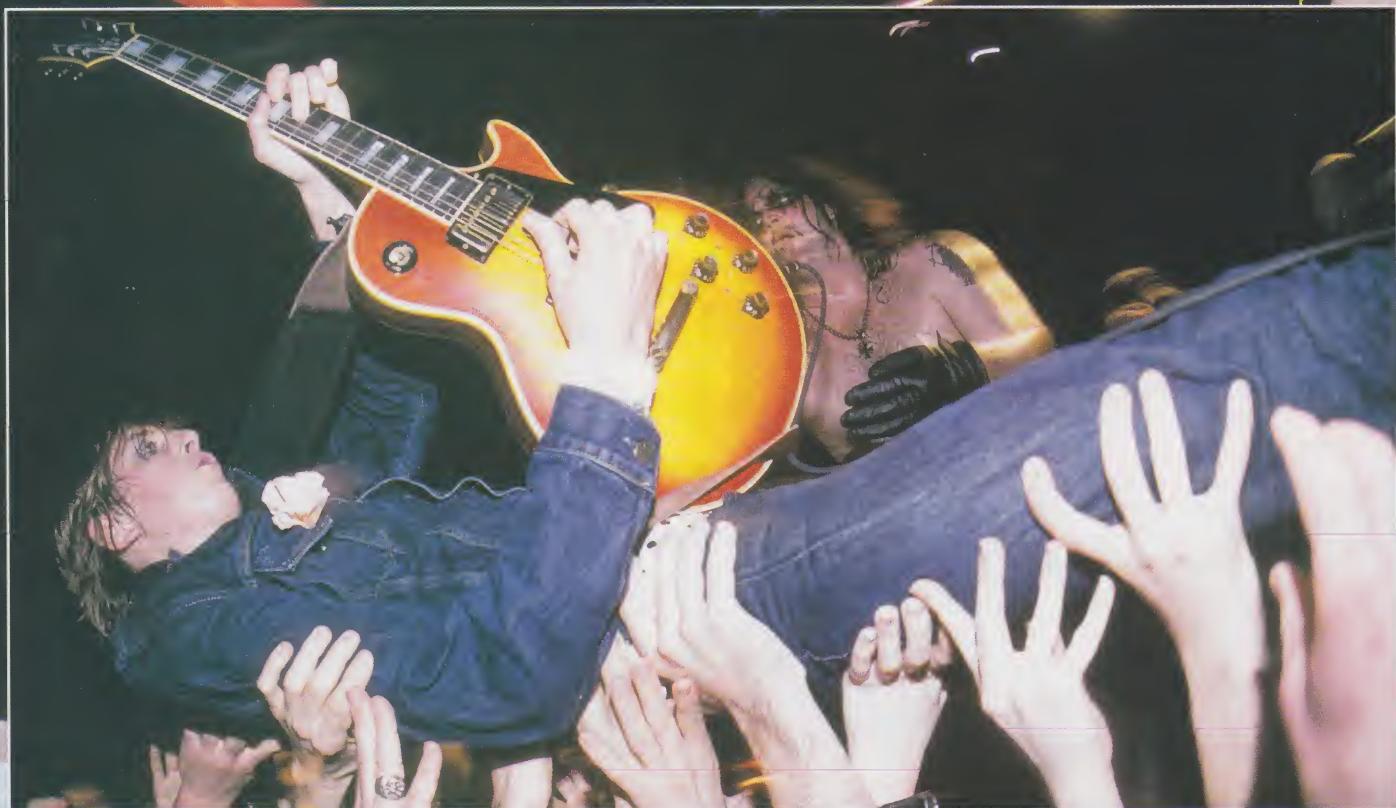


Mike Patton



Norma Jean

TURBONEGRO



Turbonegro. Those who haven't experienced their brand of cathartic, balls-to-the-wall rock and roll are often offended by the name. The growing minority of those who have heard 'em swear by them to an almost religious extent. From their humble beginnings as misunderstood misanthropes, to being credited by many as creating the *last* great rock and roll album (1998's *Apocalypse Dudes*), to their acrimonious breakup, the band never failed to shock, offend, and push the envelope of what is commonly thought of as rock and roll. Four years after their unceremonious demise, the denim dudes have crafted a great new record, *Scandinavian Leather*, signed to über-punk label, Epitaph, and are poised to take the world by brute force. I recently had the pleasure of sitting down with founding member, bassist, and tall blonde handsome sailor man, Happy Tom, along with frontman Hank Von Helvete and drummer Chris Summers in a very posh midtown Manhattan hotel to discuss the events that led up to their triumphant return.

First things first. Turbonegro is of the forebears of the elite Scandinavian rock scene, the same scene that spawned bands ranging from The Hives and The (International) Noise Conspiracy to black metallers like Emperor and Burzum. It is impossible to understand the setting that birthed this band without also considering the many different types of musical genres around them at the time. However, Turbonegro's rise to the top has been a long and arduous process. Founded in late 1988 by Happy Tom, guitarist Rune Rebellion, and keyboardist/guitarist/dancer Pal Pot Pamparius, Turbonegro began as nothing more than a group of fledgling punk rockers playing songs about drugs and girls. With more lineup changes than Spinal Tap had drummers, the young Norwegians chugged along playing their blend of punk inspired by The Circle Jerks, Sonic Youth, and The Stooges for close to a decade always retaining the core three founding members. Like any underground band they had a revolving door policy which was utilized by such personalities as Bingo and Pal Erik Carlin. Although the band only managed to garner recognition from small pockets of record geeks around the world, their years of playing shows in such high-profile venues as Oslo's dingy rock clubs, churches, and barns afforded them the opportunity to hone their sound and style.

Just as notable as their music, if not more so, is the band's experimentation with several different images. They started to move in a politically incorrect direction with the introduction of the vaudeville-esque "Al Jolson" look, named for a 1920's American black-face actor. Complete with afros, red lipstick, and black face paint, the band used this motif as the first of many different stylistic themes employed in their show. Needless to

say, this fashion decision did not last very long. It even led to a rather uncomfortable encounter with The Bad Brains. "I think they saw us and just felt sorry for us dressed like black [entertainers]," says Happy Tom. Needless to say, the two bands later smoked some ganja and all was okay.

After a few more stylistic *faux pas* the band settled on their fabled "denim demon" look. Replete with moustaches, chest hair, beer guts, mirrored aviator shades, skin tight jeans, and denim jackets (thanks to a generous endorsement from Levis), the new look accentuated every stereotype of machismo and masculinity to a comedic extent, much like The Village People did in the '70's. Hank, in a nod to Alice Cooper, began to don his trademark black eye makeup. Sitting in the bar of their hotel with Turbonegro— as Hank and Happy Tom drink beer while dressed in their khaki pants and sweaters straight from the Sears mailorder catalog— one finds it hard to believe that this is the same group of people. "We're just regular guys, see," says Hank. "So people are expecting something *really* different from us. You want different, we will give you different." Sure the "denim demon" look has since been appropriated by The Strokes of the world, but when the band first stumbled about their trademark affections, it was a shock to most people.

It was also during this period that the band would make a career defining move with the release of their seminal *Ass Cobra* record. *Ass Cobra* marked a definitive turning point in their brand of disaffected music, also called "death punk." One journalist described the music as if "ABBA had grown up all boys in suburbia on pornography, speed, and hardcore punk." Darker than anything the band had done previously, both in sound and subject matter, the new songs dealt with subjects ranging from contempt for their fans ("Turbonegro Hate The Kids"), pedophilia ("Midnight NAMBLA"), and a wild worldwide homosexual romp ("Sailor Man"). With the release of *Ass Cobra*, the "alpha males" quickly began to solidify their cult icon status in the punk underground. *Ass Cobra* was promoted extensively across Europe and The States, exposing the world to the ever-growing myth of Turbonegro and their over-the-top live show. One oft-used stunt was the infamous "ass rocket," a maneuver which involved Hank firing a roman candle protruding from his asshole into the crowd. Recently, at a show in New Orleans while on tour with Queens Of The Stone Age, "people started crying and shit. The management [of the club] said absolutely not, we're not even going to tempt our fate anymore. It's not even funny," Hank recalls.

Three years, several seven-inch singles, and a lineup change or two later, Turbonegro was ready to return to their quest of spreading global darkness. With the addition of a new drummer, Chris Summers,

and guitar virtuoso/prince-of-the-rodeo, Euroboy, the band reinvented themselves once again with what would prove to be their swan song, *Apocalypse Dudes*. A foray into the deepest and darkest reaches of The Stooges, New York Dolls, Ramones, and Dictators, *Dudes* marked the next logical progression for the band. The album was hailed by fans and critics alike as the best rock album of the last 25 years. Jello Biafra was quoted as saying, "Turbonegro are the most important European band ever," while Dave Grohl proclaimed that they "cast one of the longest shadows in rock." When questioning the band about their praise they humbly shrug off such claims of grandeur. Happy Tom modestly states: "Every band develops and evolves. We just happen to be evolving in rock and roll."

By all accounts, in the wake of *Apocalypse Dudes*, things could not have been any better for our denim clad friends from the north. Tours across Europe and The United States were in place, mounds of drugs were literally being handed to the band on a silver platter, and many a virgin ass was slain (whether that ass was male or female is debatable). Their reputation began to thrust the band to levels of acclaim beyond the punk underground. World domination was only a hop, skip, and jump away. But, like any great rock and roll story, and future VH1 *Behind The Music* episode, the proverbial shit must at some point hit the fan. And splatter it did. Amid a shit-storm of controversy, lead demon Hank Von Helvete's drug problems and unstable mental state spiraled out of control, culminating in the band's breakup in a psychiatric ward in Milan, Italy. Years of touring and rock and roll excess slowly began to take their toll on Hank, who had developed a severe dependency on intravenous drugs. The band's "Darkness Forever" tour alongside Nashville Pussy came to an abrupt end as Hank cracked under the pressures of touring. As he succumbed to his addictions, the band knew it was time to call it a day.

In the wake of their demise numerous chapters of their diehard fan club, called *Turbojugend*, have sprung up all over the world. The chapters seem to have minds of their own, at times even overshadowing the legacy of the band themselves. Several years ago rumors flew on the internet about the Dallas and Austin chapters violently feuding over who could rightfully claim *Turbojugend* Texas. "We really try not to interfere with what goes on with the chapters. We try not to meddle with them. The chapters are making their own parties and their own merch but if we can come and join them we will," says Hank. Happy Tom sums it up best: "Kiss has their army, we have our navy." You can't argue with that.

The band also garnered themselves a well deserved double LP tribute album on Hopeless Records. *Alpha Motherfuckers*, boasted contributions from Hot Water Music, Queens of the Stone Age,

Nashville Pussy, The Dwarves, and black metal gods Satyricon, just to name a few.

After a stay at a methadone clinic in the furthest reaches of northern Norway, Hank Von Helvete recovered from heroin addiction and the band soon reunited.

Fast forward to 2002. The alpha motherfuckers are back and playing festival dates at the Quart and Bizarre festivals in Europe. Asked to comment on the breakup and subsequent reunion, Happy Tom had this to say: "We never wanted to break up in the first place but we were forced to. And we had the chance to do it again, so we did. We got some offers from some decent festivals and we decided to do that because a lot of younger guys and gals never saw us play. And we thought, 'okay, let's do these festivals and if we're any good let's start playing again.'"

When asked how they felt about their posthumous success, Happy Tom states, "It's crazy, the other night these guys flew all the way from Argentina just to see us play this little shit hole in Florida. We thought we were actually going on a promo tour to try and get a bit of attention but when we came over people already knew all about us." Having the coveted opening slot on the Queens Of The Stone Age tour has indeed exposed Norway's best kept secret to the eyes and ears of the rock masses.

Queens do have their share of meatheads in their following though. At a recent show in New Jersey I witnessed several incidents where some of the numbskull audience members simply did not find the tongue in cheek, denim-clad Turbonegro amusing. Believe it or not, but a bunch of sweaty, uber-macho, hairy-chested, denim-clad fellows who dress as sailors gone bad can be seen as less than heterosexual by some. Of course in George Dubya's America, those who dare to be different are not always embraced. "They are the real faggots, the ones who feel so threatened by our whole thing. Stupidity is like a virus from outer space," says Happy Tom. Hank sees it like this: "There will always be those guys who shows up and just don't get it. Stupidity. There's like a stupid person born every minute. And there's also lots of people who get it wrong but still like it. I like that. When they love it, but they've got it all wrong. That's great." Whether you get it or not, there is no denying that Turbonegro rock hard.

The new album, *Scandinavian*

Leather, serves as a missing link for the band, stuck somewhere between the dark riffing of *Ass Cobra* and the polished glam rock of *Apocalypse Dudes*. Turbo-drummer Chris Summers jokingly agrees with me. "We actually recorded this album before *Apocalypse Dudes* then said, 'hey, let's split up for four years and then become huge and then get back together and release the album.'" And, it seems like that plan has worked out perfectly.

The return of Turbonegro also marks the triumphant return of another rock luminary. Klaus Voormann, who played bass for musicians like Lou Reed, John Lennon, and Cheech and Chong— and is perhaps more notable as the man responsible for the cover of the Beatles' *Revolver* album— contributed the cover art to the new album. The album artwork features the skeletal structure of a very phallic looking snake deep throating its own body. Very appropriate for an album named for the Scandinavian Leather Men of Oslo, a group of hedonistic buff leather-clad men fawning over each other in acts that would make even the late homoerotic artist, Tom of Finland blush.

"So how did you end up getting the cover art?" I ask. "I saw your press release said 'artwork by the fifth Beatle and I thought they were referring to Pete Best." Happy Tom concedes, "Well technically he's now the third Beatle." We laugh. "Seriously now, a couple guys in the band were big Randy Newman fans and he was a session player for Randy. So we thought let's get Voormann to do the cover. And we had one of the guys in Germany, from *Turbojugend* in St. Pauli, try to get a hold of Voormann. We called him up and he was a very negative person. I guess he was sick of being hassled by Beatles fans but we were like, 'No, no, no! It's because we're big Randy Newman fans.' Then he changed his tone a little bit."

They've conquered the underground, toured The States with one of mainstream rock's biggest names, and written the comeback album of the new millennium. What else do Turbonegro have to say to their loyal throngs of *Turbojugend*? Happy Tom: "Buy it. Buy that. Don't go downloading it off the net." Hank: "We could say something more *punky* like 'if you can't afford it *steal* it!' If you download it you have a virus." Happy Tom concludes "You can download one of our sailor caps though." "Does that come in a .hat file?" I ask as he took another sip of his lager. □

TURBONEGRO
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HASTE

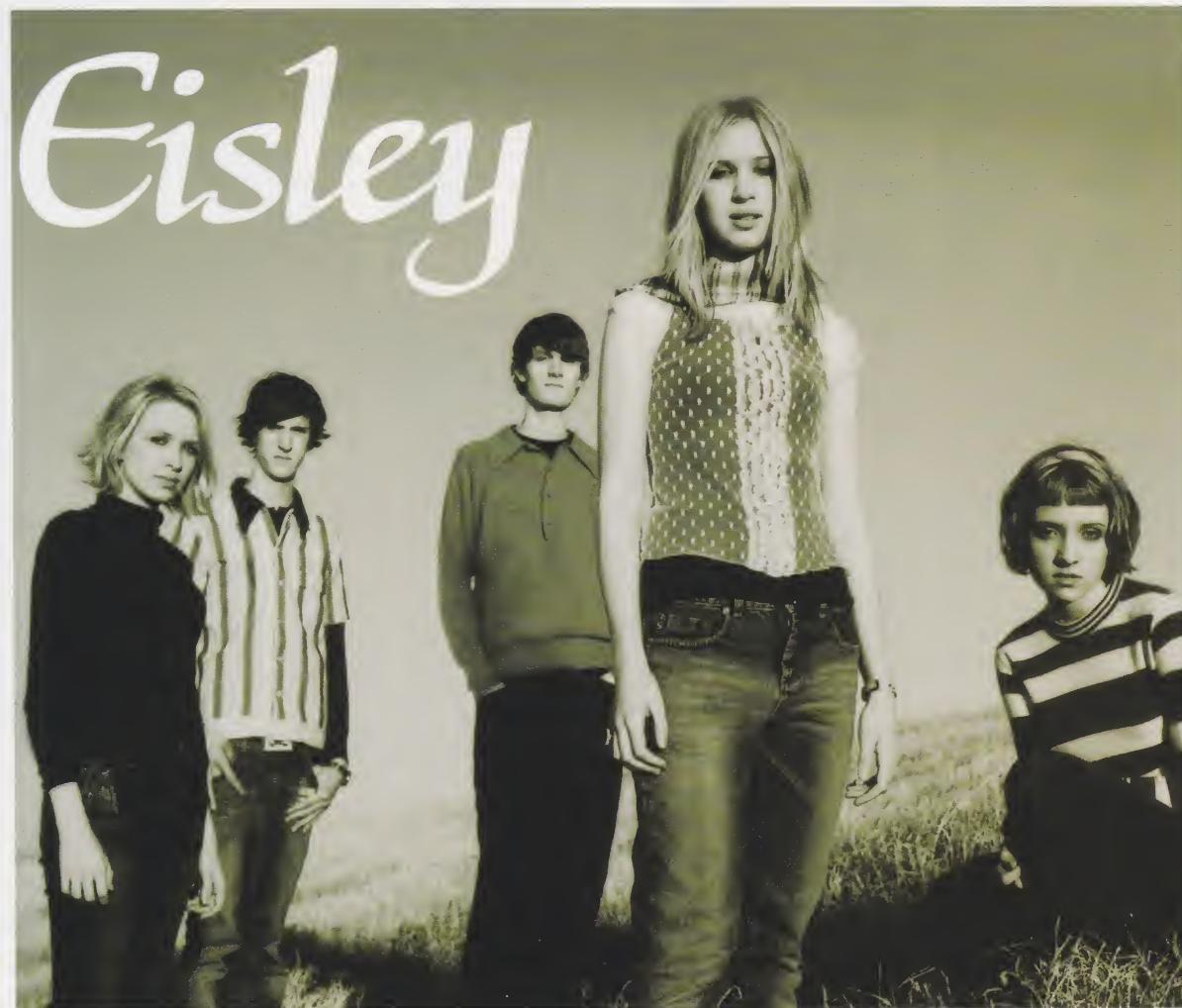
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Hot Hot Heat catapulted into the public eye with last year's release of *Make Up The Breakdown*, which earned the band stratospheric levels of hype and garnered them spots on dozens of "Best Album of 2002" lists. Although the band hails from the increasingly musically fertile shores of British Columbia, their sound is more in line with the jagged, edgy punk-funk currently emanating from New York City. From their humble beginnings as a little-known, arrhythmic synth-punk band on Florida's O Hev Records, the band has endured lineup changes, label switcheroos, and a complete stylistic overhaul to emerge as one of the freshest, catchiest, most propulsively energetic bands since, well, ever. This virtually overnight success isn't without its drawbacks, however; the band now finds itself touring relentlessly, opening for bands like No Doubt, and being forced to live up to a reputation so big that it seems to precede them everywhere they go. From what I can tell, however, their newfound fame hasn't changed the band one bit; they're still open, friendly, and prone to morning-after hangovers, just like you and me. I had the opportunity to chat with perfectly coiffed singer/keyboardist Steve Bays and drummer Paul Hawley to talk about the band's history, their new label, and their inexplicable insistence that they sound nothing whatsoever like the great New Wave band, XTC.

Would you guys give me a short annotated history of the band?

S: Sure, we started a little over four years ago. For the first two and a half years we were, I guess you could say, a punk band. We started to play parties and get people to dance, but eventually it started to get a lot heavier. After two and half years we kicked out our singer and got Dante, our guitarist, to pursue the challenge of more creative song-writing.

P: Once we made our switch we started to get better at our instruments also, so that opened up a lot of doors for us obviously.

Once you conquered the technical aspects of playing music did you start focusing on the structure of your songs instead of just how to play them?

S: Yeah, definitely. We had a rough idea of how to make songs but we really didn't spend time on arranging. Our arrangements were a bit more complex than they should have been and the melodies sort of meandered all over the place. So at some point we learned what kind of sound we wanted to have and how we wanted to achieve it.

You guys have been pretty much leap-frogging up through the musical hierarchy over the past few years. You guys started on O Hev, right?

P: Actually we started with Ache Records from Vancouver. We did a 7" and a split 12" with The Red Light Stings. O Hev put all that material on a CD. That's when we kicked our singer out and when Dante joined we went to Sub Pop a few months later. About a year later we were on Warner Bros.

How did you hook up with O Hev, a Florida label?

P: Gabe had heard of us from a friend and he looked us up on the internet and heard "Circus Maximus," which at the time we thought was our worst song. But he liked it enough to want to put it out.

S: At the time we really weren't concerned with what our recorded material sounded like. We were really focusing on how we came across live because that's where we really shine. So when he approached us we were surprised because we thought of ourselves as so much more of a live band, not a band that made records people would want to buy. We wanted people to come see our shows when we came to town, and if they had a good time, great. If they had a good time and didn't pick up a CD, okay. By the time we were hooking up with Sub Pop that changed and we started to focus more on how our recordings sounded. Of course, we had more time in the studio with them then we had on the two previous projects. The first 7" was rushed and was really just for a demo, the 12" we did was only in a day or two.

P: Pretty much all our recordings even up until this point have been really rushed as compared to other bands opening up for No Doubt. [laughter]

How did Sub Pop and finally Warner Bros. finally happen?

P: The leap happened after we got rid of our original singer and we got Dante. Dante started singing so that added an added dimension to the band that we were really happy with. We e-mailed a bunch of labels and Sub Pop was the only one that responded, and we wanted to be on their label more than any of the others anyway, so that was pleasing. They also happened to be the biggest. One of the guys that scans the bulk e-mail there had seen The Red Light Stings and had picked up the split and told the powers that be to check us out. We sat on our hands for six weeks and waited and then finally it happened.

S: We signed with Warner Bros on October 7th, right before our record came out. There were a few other labels that were interested and we felt our way around and Warner seemed like the coolest label. They seemed to have the highest concentration of music fans working there than at other labels.

They told us that they wanted to avoid a bidding war so if we would just put together a proposal they'd see what they could do. Lo and behold they gave us everything we asked for. So that was cool. [laughter] We're not going to get jacked like a lot of bands do.

Do you think you're going to avoid the same problems so many bands who sign to major labels have?

S: Yeah, I think so. We had a lot of room to negotiate because we had a good buzz going. They know we have potential so I think they'll be cool if push comes to shove. There's no bad blood between us and Sub Pop or us and O Hev. We have a good working relationship with both.

P: Sub Pop was sort of leaning us over to Warner Bros. so when we decided to leave they were more than happy.

You guys have really blown up in the past 6 months or so. I saw you guys at a small club in Brooklyn just a few months ago and last night you're playing one of the biggest venues in New York City with No Doubt! Does that ever weird you out?

P: It doesn't weird me out, but it's definitely not because we're this huge band. The fact is we are nowhere near as recognizable as No Doubt or most other bands that would play at the Hammerstein Ballroom. We have the same manager as No Doubt so it was sort of a favor to us that we got those shows. I don't know if I'd want to do something like that again. It was cool, we had fun and we played to a huge crowd—and there were some kids that held up a huge Canadian flag during our set, which was nice of them—but I'd rather play at smaller clubs where the people that come out are all our fans that really want to see us. We don't want to play to people who don't care. It was a cool experience playing with No Doubt live but it was different.

It seems like a lot of your show really involves being in a small club with the energy and the proximity that comes with being on a small stage right next to your audience. Is it hard to transfer that dynamic to a large audience?

P: It was cool last night 'cause we got to run around a lot which we usually don't have room to do.

S: We've been on bigger stages before and we don't really know what do. It's weird to learn how to rock out with kids right by your kick drum or guitar neck and then suddenly have room to run for 10 seconds without having anything in your way. It makes you play a bit differently I think. I have no idea how people in arena rock bands do it.

Tell me about the line-up change. Dante joined on guitar and you were playing keyboards before you decided to start singing as well. That's a pretty big deal. You must have felt like a totally new band when the smoke cleared.

S: It was a new band pretty much. We changed our mouthpiece—our figurehead. But it felt remarkably natural. We were all leaning the same way as to what we wanted our band to sound like. We all wanted to pay pop music with melody, and I felt really fine with it. Having another musician was also really nice because it obviously adds new layers to the sound.

P: Having a new vocalist also allowed us to make singing more of a priority than it had been. We hadn't spent a lot of time with lyrics or what the singer was doing before Steve started singing. We didn't think it was that big a deal losing our old singer, especially since he couldn't sing in key. I'm trying to think of a band that lost its singer midway through their careers.

S: Van Halen.

P: Right, they've had a few singers. So has Black Sabbath or Judas Priest, while we're on the subject of '70's metal bands. [laughter] I think people identify, emotionally, more with the singer than, say, the drummer. Most people don't understand drum-beats, they can only feel the rhythm in their body but they don't really know what a drummer is doing.

S: Exactly. Vocals are something everyone can understand. I'm glad that we did make the switch because Hot Hot Heat is a name that represents the music that comes out of us. The music will probably change but I think we now fit our name more than we did.

What direction are you going to go with your sound now?

P: Who knows? We are going to change, of course, and to strive to connect with our listeners. I never want to alienate our listeners again like we did when we changed our sound and our singer and moved labels. It's stuff we had to do, but I think when people like a band, they feel that that band is theirs. They take pride in the work that band does and how they present themselves to the world. When you change your system or even offer yourselves to a greater group of people, like we did with our label switches, people feel threatened—like the band isn't theirs anymore. We understand that, we've been through that with bands we love. So we want to dedicate our band to connecting rather than ostracizing. Hot Hot Heat is for everyone, and that's kind of the point of our band in a nutshell.

www.hothoheat.com

GIVE



UP

Last February, two West Coast visionaries released their collaborative effort to the world, and the world was pleased. While they dubbed it The Postal Service they do far more than deliver packages from one state to another.

One of these dreamers, Jimmy Tamborello, was working on a song for his solo project, Dntel, during the making of the record, *Life Is Full Of Possibilities*. Thinking something was missing, he approached wunderkind Ben Gibbard, of the beloved Death Cab For Cutie, to croon for what would eventually be called "[This Is] The Dream of Evan and Chan." Quickly a Dntel favorite, the two realized that their collaboration was far from over.

Sub Pop soon caught wind of that first song and approached the two about a full-length album. In December 2001, the two started sending each other CDs of their music, as Tamborello resided in Los Angeles and Gibbard in Seattle. Through the mail, a skeleton of electronic pop music traveled from one to the other and became more and more fleshed out with each passing. Tamborello created the base for each song, which Gibbard manipulated using analog (drums, guitar) and electronic (keyboards, drum machines) instruments through the magic of computer music software. After each song's completion, vocals were laid down and the package was again shipped to Tamborello; this arduous process painstakingly created each song. The result is some of the best pop you've ever heard, fusing equal parts techno and indie rock (thankfully, without going the way of electroclash).

Since the release of their debut, *Give Up*, they've completed their first US tour which was remarkably successful for a band that's only been around for a short period of time. During their stop at The Abbey in Chicago, I took a few minutes to chat with the two over some drinks under a lazily setting sun. I found that Gibbard and Tamborello are soft-spoken, modest dreamers who do not realize that what they did— sending music back and forth through the US postal system—is both arcane and remarkable. The idea that two fellows, two states apart who had barely met, let alone worked together musically, could create a record as tight and aurally rich as that of bands who've played in the same room for

years, is pretty astonishing by anyone's standards. Yet the two remain blasé: "The most difficult aspect was sending that first CD with those first couple songs on it back to Jimmy," states Gibbard. "I didn't know him very well at that point. I didn't know what his reaction was going to be to whatever I did on top of his music. I did a lot of hacking on one song, I cut it and moved a lot of stuff around. There was this small fear of maybe he would be, 'How dare you butcher my work!'"

For concert-goers used to impressively stoic crowds, who are more intent on looking cool than shaking their moneymakers, people actually feel the need to move at Postal Service shows. When asked if people actually dance at their shows, Gibbard responds: "Yeah, they do! They do in Orlando, in Detroit as well. The entire room was going crazy. I've never been involved with anything like that in my entire life."

Incredibly enough, the two haven't set their sights on world domination, as do most who receive such shining critical praise. When asked what the band has in store for the future, Gibbard replies, "It's going to be a little while before we start work on [another album]. I think in order to make it new and interesting we should employ different methods in writing and arranging. Maybe I'll write some music and send that to Jimmy, but we'll figure it out when we get around to it." Until then, the band plans to tour the US and Europe to promote their record. Along with Jenny Lewis, of like-minded Los Angeles indie rock band, Rilo Kiley, who serves as the unofficial third member of The Postal Service (and also contributes to their recorded work) the band is able to achieve their catchy, dynamic sound and passionate musical textures. Live, the band even covers that ode to pop nostalgia, "Against All Odds," by Phil Collins—a song that usually sends me to tears. But after witnessing the magic that this against all odds band has in spades I said to myself, "No, not tonight." Then I danced.

Check out The Postal Service immediately. They are a breath of fresh air. ☐

THE POSTAL SERVICE



Stephen Malkmus

STEPHEN MALKMUS





*S*tephen Malkmus doesn't think he is a household name. A few years ago, thanks to a Matador promotional stunt, T-shirts reading "WHO THE FUCK IS STEPHEN MALKMUS?" began adorning the bodies of indie rockers and record store snobs everywhere. "We weren't saying that people know or should know who I am, it's just kind of a joke. It's just an imitation of a pretty famous poster of Keith Richards wearing a shirt that says "WHO THE FUCK IS MICK JAGGER?" They just stole that and put my name on it because they thought it looked cool. It does look cool."

So if you've been living in-a-box/in-a-cave/somewhere-in-Delaware for the past decade and still wondering who the fuck this Malkmus guy is, well, he was just the driving force behind a little band called Pavement, arguably the most influential and consistently inventive indie rock band of the '90's.

Since Pavement disbanded, Stephen hasn't taken much time off— his self-titled solo debut was one of the hidden treasures of 2001. Somewhere along the way, a few of his fellow musicians from the Portland scene joined him, and formed a band— The Jicks. *Law of Inertia* had the pleasure of meeting up with Stephen in Matador's New York offices shortly before the release of his newest album, *Pig Lib*.

Our meeting was his last in a 3-day blitz of interviews; and despite entering the room looking slightly frazzled, being a professional who's been giving interviews for years, he was friendly, likeable, and a real pleasure to talk with. Though he is now in his mid-30's, something about him is strangely reminiscent of a 15-year-old's cocky-yet-still-awkward charm— intelligence that belies his slangy speech and sometimes short sentences. Occasionally, his speech resembled some of his more famous lyrics— launching into a new idea before he had finished expressing the previous one, as if his audience knew where the thought would end and didn't need to hear it out (which strangely enough, is usually the case). He also, inexplicably, left his navy blue ski gloves on for the entire interview.

The Jicks, who along with Malkmus are drummer John Moen (formerly of The

Maroons), bassist Joanna Bolme (of The Minders), and guitarist/keyboardist Mike Clark (of the No-No's) get equal billing on *Pig Lib*. Malkmus explained, "Yeah, now it's 'Stephen Malkmus and The Jicks.' And that's pretty true to what actually happened. The last record was pretty much me, because I kind of grabbed them and said, 'Will you play these songs? There's no guarantee that this is gonna work or that we're even gonna be a band; we gotta see how it works.'"

Listening to the album, the changes in Malkmus' music are apparent. His songs are still full of the irreverent, playful wit that made Pavement indie heroes, but the musicianship is less acerbic and the lyrics are slightly more reflective and at times even linear, something that was very rare with Malkmus' former band. The Jicks also have a tighter sound than Pavement ever did. Malkmus elaborates: "I guess we were trying to leave behind some of the Pavement clichés— there were some things I knew I would have wanted to change [about Pavement], some ironic things, maybe some of the bad lyrics, but I haven't really examined it that much. I guess The Jicks' music has a more low-key personality too. But I think you just naturally change too— what you listen to, what sounds right to you, but I don't really know why that happens— getting older, changing, growing. I guess there's just instances where you want things to be a little different. Like this record, I didn't want it to be as funny, in general, as the last one. So it's just a bit darker, more personal, more sincere-sounding, whereas the last one was just more fun-sounding."

Despite any musical evolution, the crowd enjoying The Jicks these days is still going to be largely composed of the fans who cultishly supported Pavement through the '90's. Malkmus observed, "There are some new kids, college kids, that are just coming at it from The Jicks angle, which is totally fine, but the Pavement people are always gonna be there." It is, however, unlikely the Jicks will ever replicate Pavement's brush with mainstream popularity, despite their finer-tuned musicianship. Although they were

never preoccupied with stardom, there once was a day when Pavement had videos on MTV, played Lollapalooza, and had a couple near-hits, which, if you listen to *Slanted and Enchanted* or *Wowee Zowee*, is almost unfathomable.

Sure, they're brilliant albums that broke new musical ground and inspired millions of copy-cat indie bands, but I'm afraid it will be a long time before a band characterized by the likes of Pavement's noisy, dissonant outbursts of unleashed guitar fuzz and incomprehensible, nonsensical lyrics will be a hot commodity with the music-buying mainstream. This of course begs the question of exactly how Pavement got big in the first place and has allowed someone like Malkmus to branch out on such a personal project.

Malkmus will admit that the atmosphere at the time his former band became popular was slightly different, but resigns himself to a more realistic reason as well: "I guess there was a little time after Nirvana where things were a little bit more open, but not really— I think it could happen now for the right band. [Pavement] wasn't that much weirder than Weezer or something along those lines, and they've sold millions. The thing is we also had some major-label distribution and some good press. You gotta have that— they're throwin' lots of cash out on stuff like The Strokes and The Stripes, because it doesn't happen just because people like it."

It was a bit of a surprise to hear Malkmus draw some comparisons, if only business-related, to a couple of bands who represent a "rock-is-back" phenomenon that is resented by much of the indie world. But he shrugs his shoulders and gives a fairly ambivalent response about the whole retro-garage movement: "It's fine with me. There was Fatboy Slim and techno and the next big thing, but people weren't buying it really, so they went back to the kinda grungy, neo-rock, Hives/Strokes/Vines thing. I like all those bands for what they are— it's pretty good pop music. I got nothing against 'em."

Stephen also appears to have nothing against his old bandmates either— Pavement drummer Bob Nastanovich managed the last

WHO THE FUCK IS STEPHEN MALKMUS?

tour, and nothing indicated any resentment or bitterness towards the others.

He clearly enjoys his new bandmates' abilities and company, if also their hands-off attitude to making music with Stephen Malkmus— there were no allusions to being burdened by *this* band. He makes frequent references to all three throughout the interview, and is confident that *Pig Lib* will not be the last album made with the current line-up. "There's definitely one more. But that might not even be a Jicks record per se, it might be something even weirder. It depends on what kind of songs we do and if they sound like Jicks tunes, which I think we're gonna maybe try to do, because this one's already pretty weird."

There is no question that The Jicks' music is Malkmus'; he is the sole songwriter and the songs still bear his quirky, literary signature. Malkmus admitted, "the songs are pretty complete when I bring them to the rest of the band. But they're not complete really until they sound good with those guys playing them."

In addition to being the band's primary artistic influence, Malkmus also carries the largest workload in the group. With Pavement, he often boasted, only slightly tongue-in-cheek, that they were the hardest-working band in rock. But these days, he isn't really taking it any easier. "Unfortunately, I'm still working just as hard. It's just me doing most of the press," he said, looking down at his navy ski gloves with a hint of weariness, when I ask him how the workload compares. One senses that the laziness is more of a face he puts on for the interview; a quick look at the number of gigs performed and interviews granted since The Jicks formed contradicts any argument of mid-'90's-style slackerdom.

Still, I'm not the first to wonder how long Malkmus intends to continue the album-tour-promote grind. After all, with Pavement, Malkmus once derided rockers who kept at it too long. Now at an age at which most rockers are past their prime, he's having to fend off questions left and right wondering how long he wants to be a rock-and-roller. My question to that end prompted a joking, "When they ask you that, you know it's over." Thankfully, he wasn't really offended, and elaborated. "No, that happens, people will say, 'I just did an interview with Frank Black or Paul Westerberg,'

and I'll think [as his eyes pop wide open and he switches into a panic-stricken falsetto] 'Oh shit— that's me now, I'm the next one of them!' I don't know how long, but for this album we're going [at it] thousand percent. Everyone's been home for a year, we're bored, we really want to tour, we're really looking forward to it. I think we all feel that way."

The idea of facing a more normal life after a music career doesn't seem to faze Malkmus either. He is quick to answer: "People do it. Obviously it depends on what's going on in your own life. Do you have a family or a wife and a life outside of music? Or no life, because you don't want one, and you've got girlfriends all over the country, or boyfriends all over the country? You should be fine as long as you have other interests. Which you should have anyway, no matter what you're doing. I mean think of the other side, if you've got a really prosaic job, like processing insurance claims, and you hit 52, and you say, 'My life has been really boring, and I feel really down about this...' I think that would be just as bad as 'I drank champagne off a stripper after a Lollapalooza gig and now I can't do that— I'm 52!'"

The artistic control Malkmus now enjoys also extends to the process of making a record; this album, like the last one, was made without a true third-party producer. "We don't really have a producer who's listening to our stuff and saying, 'Let's do that again,' or, 'I like that bit,' or, 'I have a sonic vision for you!' We're kind of old, for want of a better term— we know what we want and we can do that. There's some producers I would probably love to work with— I can't name any off the top of my head, but I think it can be a good thing, if you can afford it, or if you're a new band that is just starting to get a sound. The producers for these rage-rock bands like Limp Bizkit want it to sound big on the radio, so they'll add six sampled kick drums when the drummer hits it, so it's like BOOM! So it's not even his kick drum, it's Snoop Doggy Dogg's kick drum or John Bonham's kick drum. So it sounds obnoxious. We don't know how to get that sound. We don't really want that sound."

Stephen also had a lot to say about the process of making a record: "Well you decide to make an intro song, that's the most important. You can go through the whole record, and you might have a song you like more, but if you

play that first, often it just leaves you going downhill from there. You've left everyone high and then the record gets boring. So with this record we tried to give it a little time to get started. And there's always gonna be a little weak spot somewhere to somebody, songs they like less or more, songs you like less or more, and maybe truly aren't as good as the other parts— you have to admit that not every second of the album is gonna be the best. The battle is to [make] somebody closely listen to it for 47 minutes, which is really impossible to do. I guess Radiohead's pretty good at it. But even with them, I get tired of the "National Anthem" [on Kid A; he starts singing the opening bass line to make sure we know which song he's talking about]. Anyway, that's the battle."

After the interview, Malkmus hung around for awhile before leaving to design the album cover for *Pig Lib*, something he also did for all Pavement albums except *Wowee Zowee*— "I just cut stuff up and make it on the sides of a record."

After the tape stopped rolling, we shot the breeze about Ithaca, Portland, Paul Wolfowitz, favorite authors (Sinclair Lewis and Haldour Laxness), music he's listened to recently ("free stuff from Matador, vinyl, re-issues, old hippie guys, and esoteric recommendations from 'Uncle Thurston'"), and a Korean Pavement cover band he performed with, in Seoul. Stephen showed tremendous interest in all topics, often asking us questions and listening intently for our responses. It was a great time and I wished we had the chance to grab some beers together.

What this interview revealed more than anything was a musician who, despite past disillusionments with the trappings of the profession, was as enthusiastic about making music as ever.

As both post-Pavement albums and live shows have proven, he is having more fun, whether in cheeky songs that tell lighter-side stories or prog-rock-style jams that allow him to show off his much-improved guitar playing, than he has in a very long time. If someone was to ask, "Who the fuck is Stephen Malkmus?" now, well, it's someone very at ease with their musical career and having a lot of fun with it, because isn't having fun what it's all about? ☐



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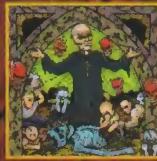
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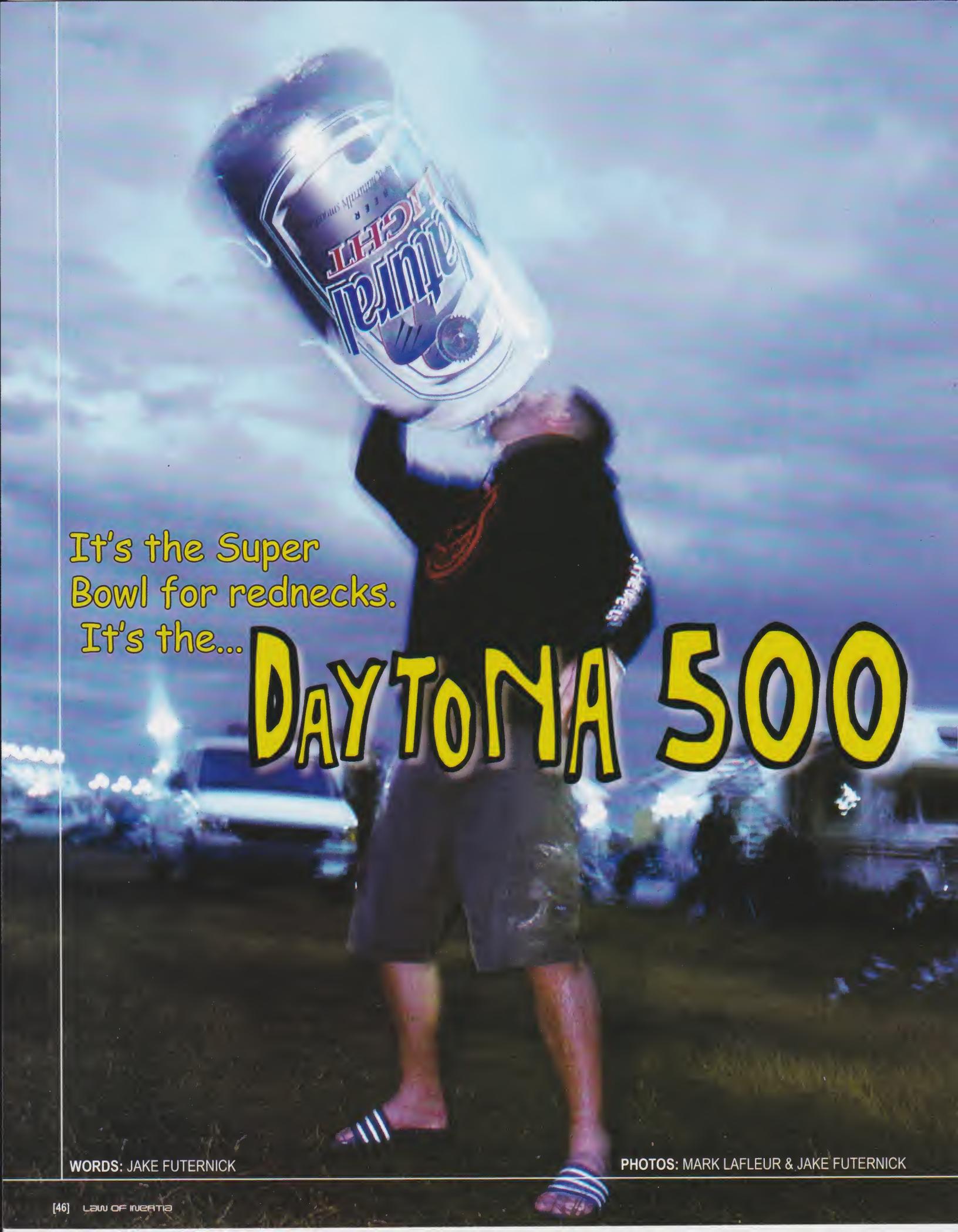


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It's the Super
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DAYTONA 500

WORDS: JAKE FUTERNICK

PHOTOS: MARK LAFLEUR & JAKE FUTERNICK

"It's like you're hanging out in your living room, except you're cruising down the highway at 70 mile per hour," says Lance Cannon, somewhere in the Arizona desert. Lance and his associate Maxwell Flemming have rented a 27-foot RV and are driving it from California to Florida to attend the "Great American Race," The Daytona 500.

They are traveling at the aforementioned speed of 70 mph on Interstate 40 roughly 2500 miles from their destination. Meanwhile, the three other members of their party are enjoying a balmy, 23 degree Boston winter day. Two days later, at roughly 5 pm, they will board a plane traveling at a speed of 500 mph to Washington DC. After a two hour layover, they will board another plane bound for Atlanta, Georgia, each will consume roughly 3-5 alcoholic beverages, and attract the attention of nearly everyone around them since they are traveling with a 6'7", 285 pound drunken giant of a man with a freshly shaven Mohawk.

To reach this point, Mark, the photographer for the trip has been risking his neck as a bike messenger on the frozen Boston streets, dodging cars and snow banks with no form of brakes other than putting his foot to the ground. Ed, the resident slacker, has been slumbering through a steady stream of boring sophomore year college classes, and Beck, the inspirational leader, has developed a fat bankroll to finance the trip by selling drugs to college kids, beating up any 16 year-old punks that come onto his block trying to sell a dime bag.

With this information, can you predict how many stops Lance and Maxwell can make along the way and still make it to the rendezvous point at 1:30 in the morning at the Atlanta International Airport and continue on through the night to Daytona?



The answer is one.

One stop on a three and a half day journey. And what better place to make that stop than the vibrant metropolis of Oklahoma City. Nevermind that after 8 pm, downtown "OKC" (as the locals call it) resembles a scene from Stephen King's post-apocalyptic-the-streets-of-every-major-city-are-deserted novel, *The Stand*. With only a handful of bars in the entire town, population 1 million, Lance and Maxwell were fortunate to stumble upon Lit, a super hip West Hollywood or East Village type place that somehow ended up in Oklahoma City. Population for a Tuesday night... 6 drunk ass people.

It's common knowledge that people don't

more than a hundred empty seats. There was even a local celebrity at the bar, "Sean D." who of course, was a midget. Finally, there were a couple of completely tanked OKC girls who took Lance and Maxwell to a house with 6 dogs and a mother passed out drunk in her room. Needless to say, Lance and Maxwell slept in the RV parked in their driveway.

The next morning, it was back on the road. Next stop, Atlanta. With Maxwell's secret $\frac{\text{time}}{\text{distance}} \times \sqrt{\text{gettin' faded}}$ formula our two adventurers perfectly timed their arrival in Atlanta, picked up their associates, and began the final leg of the journey to Daytona.

As a result of a few wrong turns, the final stop before Daytona was not Jacksonville

everyone seemed to ask him.

"Because I want to fit in," was the only answer given.

With the mullet freshly cut it was off to the local market to stock up on provisions. With the hour growing late and RV parking sold on a first-come-first-served basis on the infield at Daytona, our cash-strapped band of misfits elected the fire-engine-red ghetto brand hot dogs as their main source of food for the next four days and continued on their merry way to Daytona.

Ballpark franks supposedly "plump when you cook 'em" or so their slogan goes, but microwaving the Oh-kala dogs produced



"In the ring, there are no friends or neighbors. There is only one winner and that is *Gigantor the Redneck Killer*."

like being stereotyped, but it's also true that stereotypes wouldn't exist if there weren't people who fit them. If a movie was being made at Lit, the patrons could not have been more typecast. There was one flamboyantly gay guy who proved, even if you're in the buckle of the Bible Belt, you can still meet dudes who say "Jesus Christ" with a lisp. There was the drug dealer who at 25, had just finished up a 4-year prison term for dealing weed, acid, coke, pcp, and any other pharmacological wonder one could ever want. A nice guy, but his four years of ass-pounding at the Leavenworth State Penitentiary didn't stop him from giving Maxwell one of his nine e-mail addresses hoping he could score some liquid acid and mail it to Oklahoma in a Visine bottle. The bartender had the look and demeanor you would expect from working at place with

as planned, but the small backwater town of Ocala. Pronounced Oh-kala, it had the fortunate distinction of being the town where Lance Cannon made his final preparations before the Daytona 500.

In recent years, the mullet has risen from the depths of American society to an Internet phenomenon to yet another hipster haircut to something that now borders on passé. This evolution of the mullet has transpired under the radar of the redneck community, who continue to rock it with little attention paid to the whimsy of "civilized" society.

The Oh-kala barber seemed apprehensive about giving Lance a mullet, possibly one of those "civilized" folks herself.

"Are you sure you don't want me to just cut off the back?" she whispered in his ear.

"Why? Why would you want to do that?"

far more than what would be considered acceptable plumping. It was more of a crime against nature. By minute one, the hot dogs would balloon to nearly double their original size. In another 30 seconds, the hot dog would reach a cartoonish size, and even though holes had been poked in the mysterious exterior, it looked like it could blow at any second. Once removed from the microwave, the hot dog would rapidly shrink back to roughly its original size until the texture resembled oily Play-Doh. Drink enough Busch Light, though, and the dogs tasted just fine.

The final stop before entering the 165,000 seat stadium was the liquor store. Case after case of Old Milwaukee, Natural Light, and Busch (with all the assorted Light and Ice and whatever else they could come



up with to make this shit drinkable) was purchased and loaded into the RV.

Fortunately the limited provisions never proved to be problem once they entered the roughly 700,000-square-foot alternate universe that is the Daytona International Speedway. Over the next three days, cocktails would be provided, the Margarita Man would be hookin' it up, and all kinds of meals would be donated to the charitable, red-hot-dog-eating cause. Chicken, sausages, lasagna, ribs, and even 10 ounce USDA Grade A Filet Mignon would be procured by far-too-generous neighbors.

The original Daytona plan was to buy 1000 beers and stage the world's biggest redneck drinking contest. Everyone at Daytona had more beer than they could possibly drink, so that plan was chalked. The idea for the shittiest rock band, Marty McMarty and the McMarty Five, was briefly entertained, but chalked as well once it was realized the combined musical talent of the group was... limited to say the least, and a full fledged rock band had been set up less than 100 feet from where their RV was parked.

What could be found within the RV that could possibly leave a mark on Daytona. The answer was sitting, drunk, passed out, and snoring at the table: their 6'7" giant of a friend. With a megaphone to announce and promote their giant, and some recently purchased boxing gear to try and prevent any serious and/or permanent bodily harm, the McMarty Five were ready to go down in Daytona lore not for their musical talent, but for there ability to arrange some of the most entertaining redneck boxing around.

In case you didn't already know, it's not the actual racing that makes NASCAR so popular because it doesn't matter who you are, watching a bunch of cars drive around in a circle, no matter how fast they're going, gets boring after a while.

The crashes provide a great deal of

welcome to Unicron:

At roughly 27 feet in length, weighing in at a whopping 16,000 lbs., and referred to only as Unicron, this mobile home provided everything that could possibly be needed for a cross country journey and more. Amenities included:

A toilet, stove, shower, sink, microwave, gas oven, power generator, kitchen table (which folded into a bed), master bedroom, another bedroom, a giant named Gigantor, a megaphone, a guitar and amp, roughly 400 beers, lots of hot dogs, and of course endless good times to be had by all who entered this merry home on wheels.



entertainment when they happen, but you can never count on exactly when or where a great crash will occur. It's the drinking that makes NASCAR America's sport. If you break it down to its most basic element, NASCAR is really just the mother of all tailgating parties. You can get as fucked up as you want, you don't have to go anywhere, or wait in lines for food, or sit in traffic after the game. The basic NASCAR day goes as follows: wake up, get drunk, watch a race, hang out, grill some form of meat, party, pass out, and then wake up and do it all over again. It's a party tour going on every weekend across the country from February 'till November.

With two days of "opening act" Craftsman Truck Series and Busch Series Racing before the actual Daytona 500, word began to spread across the infield of Daytona about a giant named Gigantor willing to fight anyone brave (or stupid) enough to challenge him.

"The deal was simple," recollects Gigantor of his boxing career, something that would not only make him a redneck hero, but change the very course of his life. "Any challenger who could knock me down within three one-minute rounds won 60 bucks. It was free to enter



By Saturday night, the crowd for the redneck fights outside Unicron had grown to more than 100 strong

and they even got a headset and a mouthpiece. It was the best possible deal we could entice people with, and entice we did. It took a lot of shit-talking on the megaphone, but eventually rednecks were coming out of the woodwork. The tough guys refused the extra head protection, which only made it easier for me to knock them out."

"It was my own damn fault," he continued, "I had bragged to my friends about my new gym membership and how I'd been hitting the heavy bag every day. I was just trying to get in shape but they thought I was in training to be some kind of prizefighter. It didn't matter to them, they would have had me fight a bear if it made for a good story. But I still knew from the get go these were my mates and these NASCAR rednecks had no idea what was coming."

"My first victim was a South African gynecologist guy named Guy, who ironically turned out to be our next door neighbor. He was accompanied by his girlfriend, her daughter, and her daughter's boyfriend— all nurses. They were a strange but very friendly bunch but this didn't mean the guy named Guy wasn't going to get pulverized. In the ring, there are no friends or neighbors. There is only one winner and that was *Gigantor the Redneck Killer*."

While Guy was putting on his headgear and fixing his mouthpiece, Gigantor was pounding his 20th beer and taunting the crowd, now thirty strong and growing.

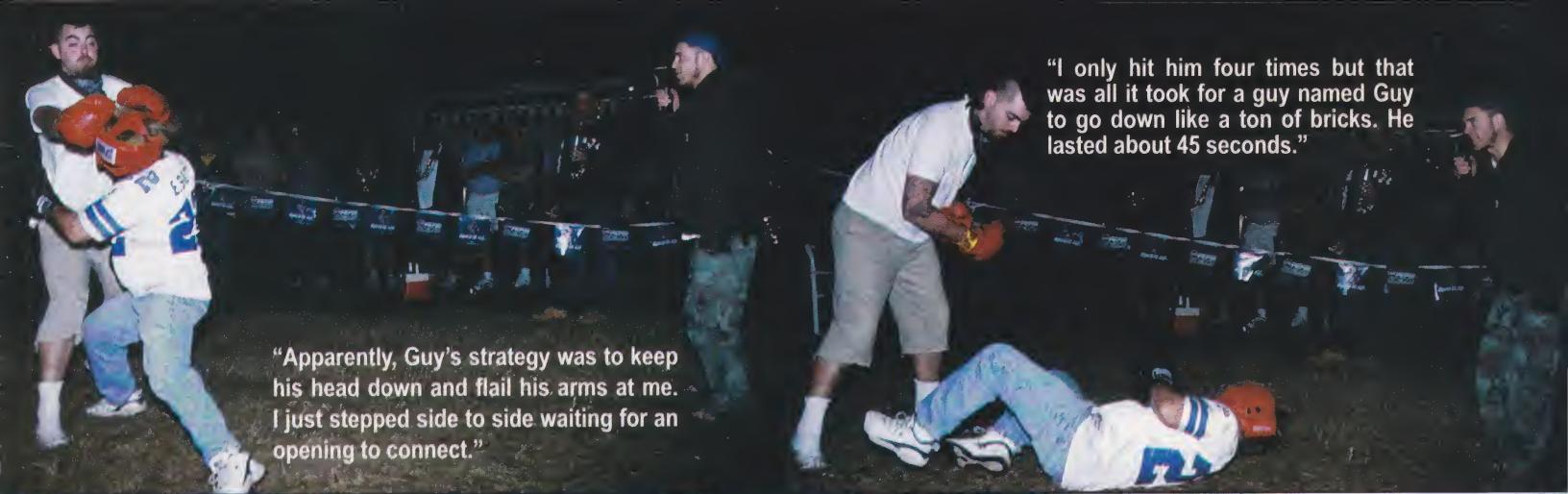
"Apparently, Guy's strategy was to keep his head down and flail his arms at me. I just stepped side to side waiting for an opening to connect. I only hit him four times but that was all it took for a guy named Guy to go down like a ton of bricks. He lasted about 45



Beer, babes, and fame. What else could a giant want?



KNOCKOUT!

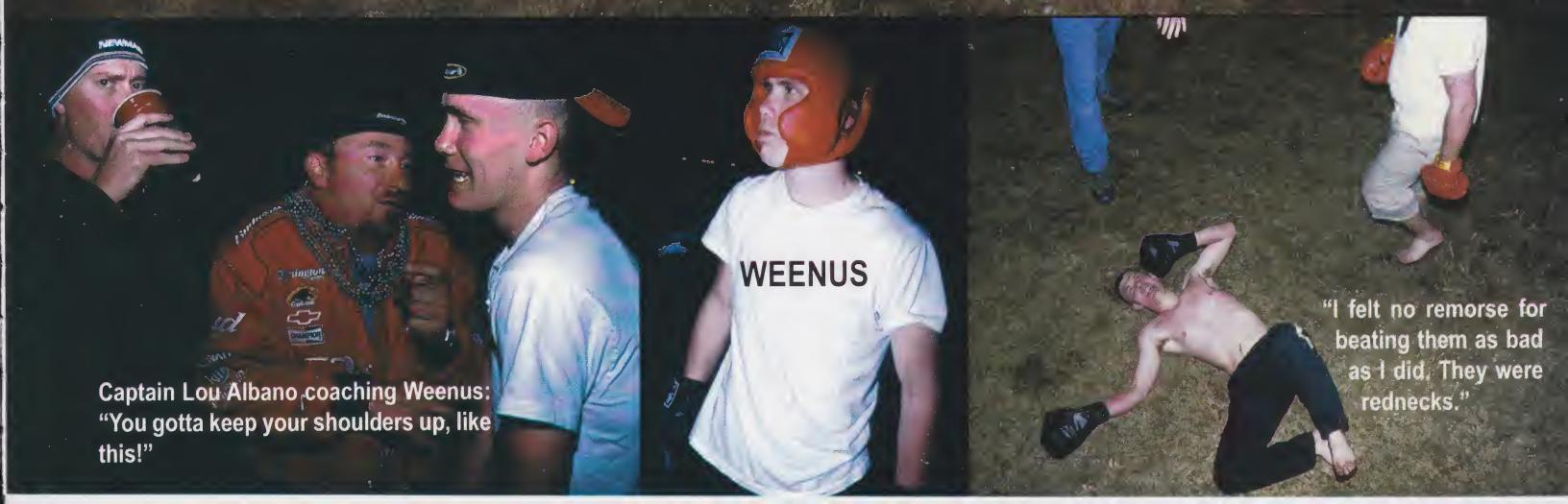


"Apparently, Guy's strategy was to keep his head down and flail his arms at me. I just stepped side to side waiting for an opening to connect."

"I only hit him four times but that was all it took for a guy named Guy to go down like a ton of bricks. He lasted about 45 seconds."



"All I could think of was giant retards with bulging foreheads wearing nothing but overalls trying to bite my ears off while their toothless mothers-for-trainers yelled words of encouragement."



**Captain Lou Albano coaching Weenus:
"You gotta keep your shoulders up, like
this!"**

WEENUS

"I felt no remorse for beating them as bad as I did. They were rednecks."



seconds."

After watching Gigantor pound his own neighbor into the dirt, it was obvious that the crowd was feeling apprehensive about stepping into the ring with this beast of a man. To lighten the mood, a 2 on 1 boxing match was arranged pitting Lance Cannon and Mark the photographer against Gigantor. Both respectable fighters, Gigantor swatted them away like flies, dropping his second and third victims to the ground.

The strategy worked however, because before Mark and Lance could even shake off the cobwebs, a new challenger had stepped into the ring. Known only as "Wenus," he received some last minute coaching from his brother and drunken friend before stepping into the ring. Standing at about 6'3" and weighing close to 200 pounds it looked as if Gigantor had met his first match. The crowd began to grow with anticipation of a real fight.

In the second round, Gigantor delivered a devastating left, landing squarely on Weenus' jaw, and Gigantor scored his first official KO. Weenus eventually picked himself off the dirt and the legend of Gigantor was born.

You could hear his name echoing around the beer-stained infield, "You hear about that fellah 'Gigantor' down by turn one, knocked a grown man silly with one punch." Walking around with him, you could catch people pointing out of the corner of your eyes. The drunker and bolder ones would approach, shake his hand, and look up into his droopy alcoholic eyes with child-like wonder.

It didn't take long for the few single women of Daytona to start hanging around the RV. Gigantor had not showered for days, his speech was constantly slurred, and mysterious bruises began appearing all over his body. But none of this mattered to the women of Daytona, *he was famous*.

"I even got laid by this woman," he boasted after his first night of fighting. "She was definitely in her 30's and definitely a redneck. But by that time I was so shit-faced with balls the size of watermelons, I would have fucked a tree stump. She was a good lay, but I hope I never see her again. She was married, I think."

Daytona is a strange place, where strangers become neighbors in the blink of an eye, which makes hiding any personal business an impossible task.

The guy in the tent next door was an otherwise great guy if you overlook the wife-beating, the girls flashing the crowd the night before turned out to be at least 4 years under age, and when Gigantor is rocking the RV, it doesn't matter that small children gathered 'round to watch.

His punching power was strong, but his humping power was stronger. The 16,000 pound RV was no match for his mighty thrusts. It rocked violently back



and forth to the never-ending amusement of everyone nearby.

Daytona awoke to a steel-grey sky the morning of the 500. There was at least a 50% chance of rain yet spirits remained high.

It is a strange thing to go to sleep at night to an empty grandstand, and then wake up to 165,000 people in your living room. The 750+ horsepower engine began to rumble to life, a squad of fighter jets flew by and it was hard to tell what was louder, the jet engines or the roar of so many red-blooded Americans. The entire grandstand above the back straightaway alternately read USA USA USA or displayed giant American flags.

Gigantor was a pig in shit.

With so many new people arriving on the infield, everyone who knew Gigantor wanted to show him off to their friends. It was unclear whether he was drunk on alcohol or on fame.

It didn't matter to Gigantor when the called the race was called due to rain with 227 miles to go, his first Daytona girlfriend was nowhere in sight and he had stumbled upon another girl who was wide-eyed and eager to get to know Gigantor a little better.

What was now the McMarty 4 began searching for Gigantor once the race ended and the infield began to empty. The general mood was somewhat downbeat, but not for the McMartys. They had come for the culture, not the racing, and had not been disappointed.

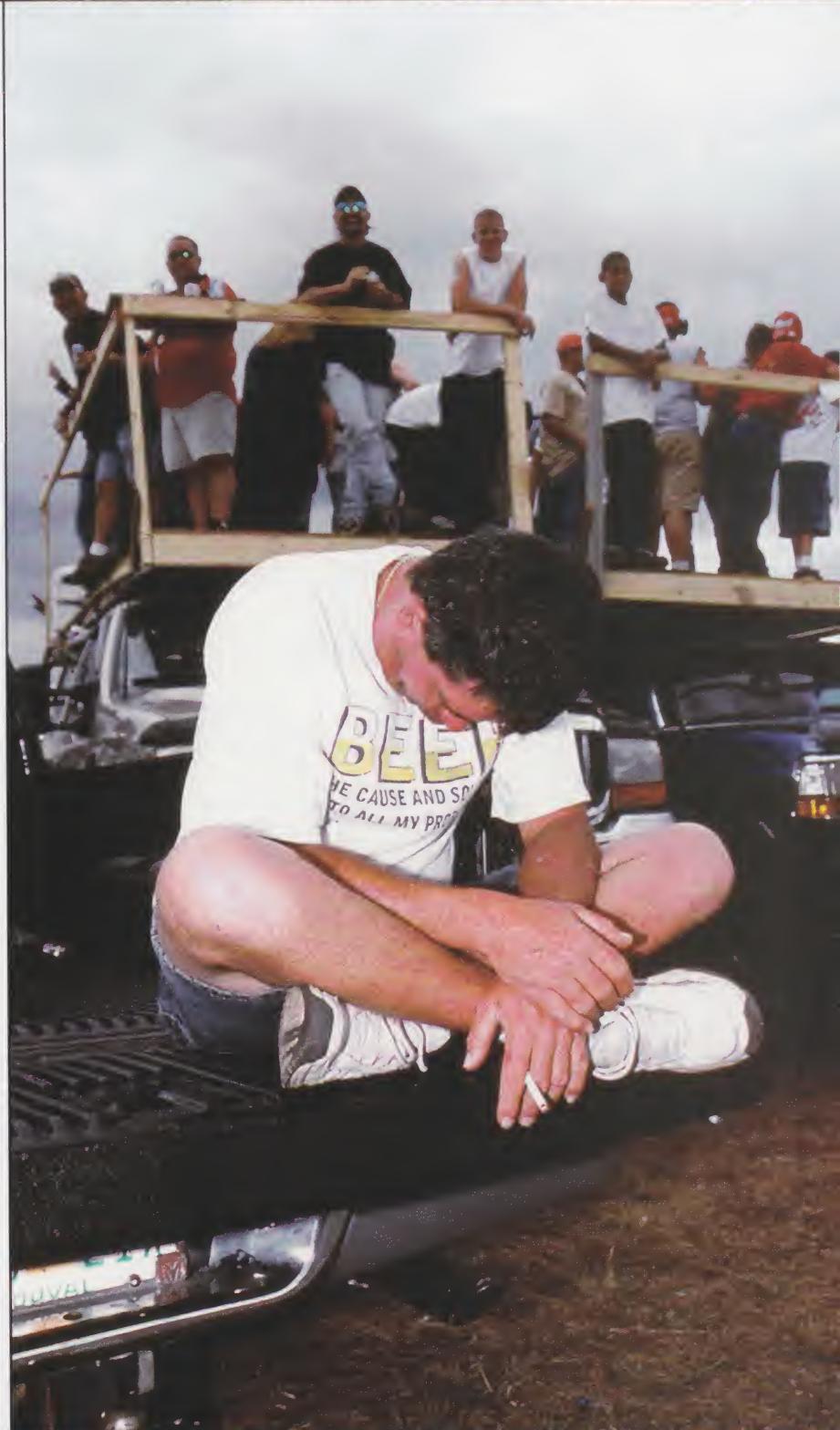
They found Gigantor with his new girl, sitting in front of a dwindling barbecue. She had the look only true white trash women could pull off, a mix between 5 and 50, but she was not entirely unattractive.

Something about Gigantor was different though, and it wasn't just all the blows to the head he had taken over the course of the weekend. Something about him had changed. The rest of the crew was getting antsy to head back up north. They were predicting snow on the ground from South Carolina to Maine and they wanted to leave before the storm hit.

Maybe they should have reacted differently when Gigantor said he was going to stay, head up to Rockingham for the next race, then maybe on to Vegas after that; reminded him of the life he was leaving behind. But something about the look on his face told them he had found his home, his people.

They never heard from Gigantor again, and who knows, maybe he's still a king among men. Then again, maybe he's no longer a novelty to the redneck world, just fatter, dumber, and more of a drunk.

Looks like they'll have to wait a year for the next Daytona 500 to find out what has become of a giant among men, what has become of *Gigantor the Redneck Hero*. □



Imagine your first hardcore show. The setting was probably a damp, dark basement somewhere in suburbia. Moms' mini-vans line the streets as too many kids cram themselves into a small rec-room with a shoddy PA on one side. The energy is intense and fills the few vacant spaces unused by sweaty teenage bodies. The band straps on their guitars with the crowd barely a foot from their second-hand Marshall half-stacks. Eye level with the crowd, the guitarists unwittingly coax feedback from their overdriven amps. The drummer raises his arms and before he can slam his sticks down on the crash cymbal, every kid in the place has lunged forward in anticipation. The song starts and your life is forever changed.

Although Long Island, NY's The Movielife have moved from this locale to the greener pastures of the land's biggest rock and roll venues, the atmosphere at their shows is still as exciting and sincere as it was when the band played their first show at the famed L.I. all-ages venue, the PWAC. "I'll be totally honest: when I started The Movielife I had just finished high school and all I

wanted out of a band was to play the PWAC with my friends, have kids sing along to my songs, play a few more shows, and break up with some good memories. Six years later I never thought I'd be doing this as a career," recounts The Movielife's charismatic singer, Vinnie Caruana.

Needless to say, this band that helped transform the small-yet-devoted group of kids that comprised the Long Island punk scene into what has been referred to as "the next Seattle," has been making waves all over the nation. To their fans, The Movielife is a sincere testament to the idea that life on the road, success, and even hardship, both physical and emotional, can be uplifting, fun, and inspiring. Along with fellow Long Islanders, The Glassjaw, Taking Back Sunday, The Reunion Show, and Brand New, The Movielife are bringing a fabled island right outside the New York City metropolitan area to the forefront of American rock and roll. Fortunately for the music buying public, Long Island is now more synonymous with amazing punk rock than it is with Billy Joel or Blue Oyster Cult, as it once was.

However, the band's roots are not as grandiose they may seem. They did not simply strum their first chord and instantly become the recipients of lucrative recording contracts or tour buses. Like most well respected underground bands, The Movielife have cut their teeth through touring the old fashioned way: living on ramen for months at a time while riding around the country in a beat-up van.

It's not a coincidence that The Movielife's history is intertwined with every good punk band from Long Island. The band was founded in 1997 after original guitarist Ed Reyes heard Caruana sing a duet with Darryl Palumbo on Glassjaw's "The Snow Veil." Reyes was so impressed that he asked Caruana to start a band with him. Caruana: "I told him, 'thanks man, but I can't sing.' He was like, 'Well, you're going to have to learn because I want to start a band with you.'" And start a band they did. The Movielife began gigging around the Long Island and eventually embarked on a 3-week US tour with friends and kindred-spirits, Inside. "It was amazing! Inside rented a van and we packed



all our equipment in there as we all rode around the country in a Jeep. Of the 12 shows we had scheduled on the trip, like 6 of them were cancelled. It was an eye-opener, for sure." But the band didn't falter. Local Long Island personality, Mike Dubin, and his friend Neil Rubenstein (frontman for infamous hardcore heroes Sons of Abraham and later This Year's Model) released the band's first full-length *It's Go Time* on their imprint, Fadeaway Records. Shortly before The Movielife's, "Valens," was featured on Deep Elm's *Emo Diaries No. 4*, founding member and touchstone, Reyes left the band to start Taking Back Sunday. Undaunted, The Movielife recruited Brandon Reilly and Dan Navetta on guitar, and bassist Phil Navetta, to round out their line-up.

This roster would prove to be just the thing The Movielife needed to get their fledgling hardcore band off the ground and into the hearts and minds of punk kids across the country. "Around this time I decided to drop out of college and do music full time. My parents didn't quite understand at the time, but that's what parents are for, to make

sure you're making the right life choices. It was just something I knew I had to do—make a career out of music," says Caruana. All too often these days, people start bands for the sole purpose of "getting signed" or to make a lot of money. One gets the impression Caruana is sincere when he says that was not his goal.

After catching the ears of hardcore stalwart, Revelation Records, the band turned in its second full length, entitled *This Time Next Year*. It sent them touring the country for most of the next year with friends like Glassjaw and New Found Glory, and cemented their position as one of the better hardcore bands in the United States.

Around this time the band got in a devastating van accident in North Dakota that left every member of the band with injuries. Caruana: "We had had enough with Revelation at this point. We had just released *The Movielife Has A Gambling Problem* on Drive-Thru and when we got in the accident we asked Revelation to give us money to fly home. They refused. Unfortunately I don't even speak to anyone at the label anymore—which is

too bad, because they are cool people—but when people ask me about the incident I have to tell them the truth. We decided to do our next record with Drive-Thru." (The Movielife's drummer, Evan Baken, was recently involved in another car crash. He was forced to take a hiatus from the band to recover, a leave from which has only recently resumed duties behind the skins.)

Their recently released *Forty Hour Train Back To Penn*, produced by uber-producer and "sixth Movielife member," Brian McTernan, was released on Drive-Thru this past February. The record is a stunning display of the power and finesse The Movielife has become famous for. The guitars are crisp and polished, the drums are heavy and forceful, and the bass provides a perfect low-end to add balance. Above all, Caruana's, story-telling vocals make the record a keeper. He says simply, "I write what I feel and I try to pull no punches. I think the end result is that kids feel very loyal to us and come to think of me as a friend and The Movielife as more than just our band... they come to think of The Movielife as their band."



Caruana insists that while his band is his career, he remains a music lover first and foremost. "I got into punk rock when I was about 12 through my brother's friends who were friends with the guys in VOD. I have loved following and making music ever since. One day the people around me realized that I was serious about this as more than just a fan; as someone who needs to make music in order to have a happy existence." Perhaps that is what separates The Movielife from many of their contemporaries.

MTV feeds us "punk" in the form of Avril Lavigne and Good Charlotte, but while so many kids in America eat that stuff up by the bucketful, The Movielife remain below the mainstream's radar. The reason may be that Caruana's songs are not as diluted or as saccharine sweet as others who seem to be masquerading in order to sell a few records. Another reason may be that The Movielife's songs are not designed to cater to the latest pop-culture craze or phenomenon. Caruana's stories aren't concerned with fads. He states: "I don't write for anyone but myself. I try to

write lyrics that tell stories I want to exercise and that I want to discuss with the world. I don't try to appeal to some vision someone else may have for me." This may mean Caruana is shooting himself in the foot in a world of marketing plans and music companies obsessed with the bottom line. Or it may mean that if success is going to come to the members of The Movielife in the way that it has come to their friends, then it is going to come to them on their own terms. Caruana says, "I have nothing against success. Some of our band still lives with their parents because it is hard to be self-supporting while playing music at 23. But you know what? I saw A New Found Glory play to ten kids in Long Island when The Movielife was starting out and the fact that that band, who are some of our best friends, are doing as well as they are doing is awesome. Especially since they did it honestly and fairly and didn't break any rules to get where they are. That is something anyone can aspire to."

Forty Hour Train Back To Penn, is a record that will probably not land the band on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, much less in *Maximum Rock And Roll*.

The album is a shining example of a band playing catchy, fun, and sincere music without catering to the hype of the moment, or what else is going on in the hardcore/punk world. The secret may be that Caruana rarely listens to the bands he shares the stage with when donning his headphones late at night. "I can't speak for the rest of the band, but some of my favorite bands are Nirvana, De La Soul, Silent Majority. I think most kids assume I listen to Finch and Good Charlotte. Those bands are cool, but I love Public Enemy and Big Daddy Kane more than anything we would find ourselves compared to." He goes on, "I think the best thing about our band is that we don't fit the stereotype of what people in bands have to be like Dan [Navetta], our guitarist played football in high school, and a lot of our original fans weren't necessarily the same kids I'd see at shows when I was growing up. But we do what we think is right and do what we love. If that is music than that's awesome. If not, so be it." Regardless, The Movielife aren't going anywhere but right into your heart.

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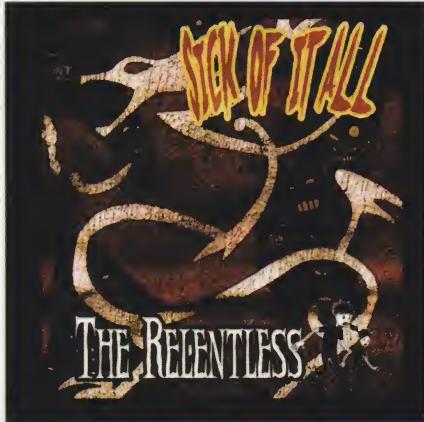


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COREWEB.COM

the rise & fall of a porn empire

I think I was destined to fail from the beginning. Getting caught up in the start-up dot-com fad just as the market started to head right down the crapper. Our business was porn, but we had many more aspirations for the "corporation." I think it could have been my heavy addiction to crack cocaine, or maybe it was the Special K that did us in. No, I think it was the police raids, but, then again there were the mental breakdowns, the shopping sprees, and the absurd alcohol abuse. Whatever it was, everything sure went to shit in the end.

Our business was a joint effort: I was the brains behind the operation, John did all the web design, and Tony provided the girls. Now, I really didn't do too much of anything, but John had a talent for designing entire websites in a night when provided enough coke, and Tony's dad owned most of the strip clubs in suburban Pennsylvania. Tony was the key because without the girls we had no website, and no website meant no money, and no money meant no being young, rich, and self-destructive.

I met Tony in the summer of '99 with my dealer buddy Jesse somewhere deep in South Philly. Jesse's regular guy was out of town and he needed some decent weed. Naturally he came to me, since my crew and I hooked up just about every college kid in Center City, Philadelphia.

The thing about Tony was that he liked to barter. I had some kind bud, he had some coke strong enough to numb the back of my throat like Novocaine. I spared a gram for a couple mindless hours of fun. We became instant drug buddies.

Our plan was to corner the Philly porn scene, retire early, and get high for the rest of our lives. The first thing we decided that we needed was a place. Whoever came up with the idea was a mystery to me but before I knew it I was cosigned for a lease on a \$23,000 a year two floor penthouse pimp pad a block away from City Hall. John had scored big on an insurance scam and insisted he make the deposit and pay the first month's rent. He had the utmost confidence that our website would do well, so nearly two grand a month in rent didn't phase me. My head was so full of shit I was flying on autopilot anyway, anything sounded good to me. I moved in with a queen-sized mattress, a love seat, and a trash bag full of clothes. John came with even less. All he had was a laptop which he

used to mail order furniture off the Internet. This meant furniture was getting delivered on a daily basis. The thought that the money we were spending would ever run out never crossed my mind.

Before we even had made our first dollar, we had a fully furnished penthouse apartment and pockets bulging with drugs. We believed that inspiration took fuel and we needed to be well stocked if we were going to sustain our new high-class lifestyle.

Coreweb.com was not your average "look at naked girls" website. Sure you could find those kinds of pictures on our site, but our brilliant idea was how they got there. You see our slant was to let amateur photographers and videographers come in and shoot their own stuff. This way people could come in and build their portfolios in hopes of getting jobs in the adult entertainment business. That, or just be there firsthand to take some photos of a topless chick. It was \$165 for a roll of 24 and \$315 for 60 minutes of tape, payable with MasterCard, Visa, or my favorite, cash.

Our first order of business was to find a suitable hotel to host our sessions. Due to our ever-growing champagne tastes, we weren't going to settle for any roach motel off the Turnpike. We went straight to the Philadelphia Hilton to inquire about their executive suites. It was exactly what we needed. There was an elegant foyer for our waiting clients, complete with a full bar and kitchen. Double doors opened into the master bedroom which was furnished with a king-sized bed and had enough standing room to fit a crew of twenty.

We signed a contract with the hotel that allowed us to have "business meetings" three times a week for one month. That night, John began working on our website. I went out to celebrate my new career as a "web designer," buying shots for anyone around me at the bar and ending up smoking rock alone at the end of the night in the elevator on my way back up to the penthouse.

The next day the website was finished. Everything from animated buttons to an appointment calendar to a credit card payment page. We took out an ad in the free weekly paper and posted some fliers around the seedy parts of Philadelphia and within four days we began getting our first hits. Not long after that, we had our first clients. We were in business and I still had yet to lift a finger.



~~By the end of the month~~ we had made \$17,000. Split ~~between~~ 3 ways and minus the girls cut we each got about \$5,000 apiece. The girls were happy and we were happier, not to mention higher than ever.



We were going to "corner" the Philly porn scene. ~~and everything fell into place~~ before curvy, and get high for the rest of our lives.



On day 3 of month 2 ~~we~~ we got raided by the police.



The next week was full of appointments and the positions went as followed: My job was to welcome the customers, as they were called, up to the room as well as tend to the girls' needs, which meant always having champagne and coke at the ready. Tony was the bodyguard for the girls, putting down duct tape three feet from the edge of the bed on all sides, warning everyone to stay behind the line. John was the money man, on his laptop in the foyer, taking the customers' credit card numbers. By the end of the first week we had \$1,500 in the bank and appointments made for the next three weeks.

The customers were all the same. Fat, middle-aged perverts with digital cameras. God only knows what they did with their footage but we didn't care. All we cared about was the money. A lot of them became regulars, bringing both still and video cameras. The more they came, the more footage they wanted. I didn't know about the other guys, but for the first time in my life, something I set out to do was actually coming together. By the end of the month we had made \$17,000. Split three ways, minus the girls cut, it worked out to about five grand apiece. The girls were happy and we were happier, not to mention higher than ever. Both John and I bought an 8 ball a day. We'd get "zapped" and think of ridiculous things to spend our money on. Saving it was never even a consideration. John started taking limos everywhere he went, sometimes just down the block to the grocery store for his many dinner/drug parties.

Of course, this is about the time things started to fall apart.

In the first week of the our second month we began spending more money than we were making. Again, John guaranteed me I had nothing to worry about. He couldn't have been more wrong. It was in this week that we also got raided by the police. Apparently a concierge at the front desk had tipped off the police to what he believed was a prostitution ring going on in our suite. It was only after they put us all in handcuffs that they realized this was not the case. For some reason, they never searched us, which was just fine with me considering we collectively had about twenty grams of coke and four vials of Special K, which is about three to five years in the Pennsylvania State Penitentiary.

John whipped out some contracts and other legal documents and thirty minutes later we were off the hook, but only with the cops.

The hotel immediately cancelled our contract and informed us of their plan of suing. The customers who happened to be there at the time left cursing and demanding their money back, which they never got. We were told to leave the hotel at once and that we'd be hearing from their lawyers. Apparently they didn't think porn was a legitimate business for their executive suites.

On top of our room at the hotel getting raided, the next day Tony's father found out he was using the girls outside of the club, not to mention screwing him out of a cut. Tony was fired and nearly disowned all in one day. Now, even if we found another hotel to conduct our business, we had no girls, and our rent was due.

Because of my coked up, highly paranoid state, I began thinking someone was out to ruin my life. How else could I rationalize such a drastic turn of events? I spent the next four days in my room getting high and watching porno. The only time I left my room was to steal John's credit card while he was passed out to order call girls, sometimes two or three a night.

When I finally came out of this self-destructive fog, the drugs were gone and John's credit card was maxed out. He had been drinking so much he forgot he even owned the thing. That's when I realized my dream was over and I needed to get out.

I waited for John to go to the bar and then packed all my clothes back into the black plastic trash bag I showed up with and left, tossing my keys and cell phone in the trash.

That night I called my father from a pay phone telling him I needed a little vacation from the city and asked if it was okay to come stay with him. He knew I was bullshit, but before long, I was on a bus back home to Jersey.

The last I heard of John, he was trying to hold on to the penthouse but eventually got kicked out and now along with me was getting sued for \$20,000 in back rent for breaking the lease. He tried other web sites, but failed while his drug and alcohol addiction quickly took over his life. His current whereabouts are unknown.

Even though it ended ugly, for me, it was worth it. For that one month I was high on the hog as I've ever been. I actually feel honored to have been able to get a taste of the high life. We had no business making money like that but we were. Even if it was just for a month. ☐



FURTHER SEEKS FOREVER



In early 2001, Further Seems Forever came out of nowhere to give the world their emo-soaked musical collage, *The Moon Is Down*. The band released this album posthumously, in a manner of speaking, since the record's singer had been replaced. Vocalist, Chris Carraba, had been making tidal waves across the newly hyped, corporate-sponsored "emo" movement with his blend of nice-guy vocals and coffee house acoustic guitars. Before leaving Further Seems Forever to venture out on his own, and into the Walmarts of the world, he helped the band complete their *Tooth and Nail* debut. Mostly because of Carraba's buzz, the band he once fronted quickly rose to the top of independent music's ranks and sold 90,000 copies of their opus. But what people started to realize when they really listened to the record—past Carraba's guy-next-door crooning and into the music and arrangements—was that this band was not only really good, but really interesting as well. Taking cues from Sunny Day Real Estate and *Sensefield*, Further Seems Forever laid down dreamy guitar lines, thundering drum beats, and yes, Carraba's cutie-pie whispers. The end result was a surprisingly good record.

Alas, the band was left without a singer, which is kind of a problem in a world where bands earn the bulk of their keep through a steady year-round tour schedule. Enter Jason Gleason. Formerly the singer of Michigan's *Affinity*, he heard through the indie rock grape-vine that his favorite Florida quintet had been reduced to the sad state of only being a quartet. Gleason flew down to Florida and the rest, as they say, is history.

So the band hit the road, inaugurating their new singer in front of sold-out crowds. Most of the people in attendance realized the gentleman singing to them wasn't the guy they seen the night before on *MTV Unplugged*, but his voice was so soothing people quickly lost interest in the band's former frontman. Further Seems Forever was finally making a name for themselves as a band, not just as "that band that the dude from Dashboard used to sing for."

In late 2002, the band released *How To Start A Fire*, their first testament as their own, unique entity. To many people's ears, the sound was even more lush than before, partly because Gleason's Jeff Buckley-meets-Geoff Rickley (Thursday) singing style is about as soothing and polished as any in popular music.

I recently had a chance to sit down with Gleason as his band left on tour. It may not be obvious, but even a band that sells 90,000 copies of their first record still has the financial sense, and perhaps even a bit of the humility, to travel in a van. As you can imagine, a seven hour ride stuffed in an Econoline with five other guys and a trunk full of equipment can make someone a little stir-crazy. Fortunately, Further Seems Forever's van comes equipped with a few video game consoles. I was interested to see whether an avid gamer, who also happens to be creative, feels that artistic expression can sometimes be hampered by the sheer ease of settling into the couch, bag of Fritos in hand, for a game of *Sonic The Hedgehog*. Here's what I found out.

Okay, I'm going to give you a really challenging question to start things off. Now, thanks to inventions like the Sony Playstation, the internet, and MTV, American kids tend to spend more time indoors sitting on their asses than they used to.

Do you think American culture, or even music as an art form is suffering in creativity and originality because of the technology revolution that's happened in the past 10 years?

Yes and no. You see, I'm a pretty happy and healthy human being. I love video games but I don't sit around all day watching TV or playing on my X-Box. There's maybe one day a month where I'll be a lazy-ass and just sit around all day long. For the most part it's a pretty fun way to kill time on long rides in the van. I think video games [in particular] are good for hand eye coordination and they expand the mind.

Do you really think video games expand the mind? Honestly?

I think in a way video games expand the mind just as much as reading the newspaper or a book, in a way. It depends what game you're playing. If you play a game where you just run around and shoot people then no, of course not. But if you're playing a strategy game—like a game I've been playing called *The Thing*, it's based on the old movie. I have four guys in my squad of army dudes. Not only do I have to keep them happy, but I have to make sure they all have bullets as well. If they start stressing out then they start turning on you. It's a challenging and strategic look at war. I think that people who play this game might learn organizational skills and what it takes to lead a group of people. I wouldn't say I necessarily use any of the

skills I use in a video game, but there's total differences [in which games you play]. When a game like *Mortal Combat* comes out that's a different story. That's just oddly-dressed people beating the shit out of each other. There's no point except to hit the other guy first, which obviously is a poor message to send to kids. Then again, I have fun doing it—I have fun sitting in another world for a while instead of being in a boring van for 8 hours.

There's a lot of people who spoke of the dumbing-down of America thanks to the emergence of television in the '50's and '60's. What do you think those people would say about people who get addicted to video poker or people who spend two weeks straight trying to beat the new *Final Fantasy*?

I don't think I would make an argument for or against video games as being beneficial to society. At the very least, they're fun, and everyone wants to have a good time. I do read, I'm active—I skateboard all the time—and I spend half my time playing music. I'm hardly one of those guys who wakes up at noon, smokes pot, and then goes to make waffles for the rest of the day. [laughter] But, I definitely think there are kids out there who are being dumbed down by technology. I mean, chronic obesity is on the rise in America and this may be the reason for it. To me, anything in moderation is all right. I know it sounds super cheesy, but it's just like when kids got into *Dungeons And Dragons*, or why teenagers do hallucinogenic drugs—you get to be someone else for a time, or at least feel like it. And in certain ways, to certain extents, that is a very pleasing option; even if it's just a means to kill time until we get to Seattle.

Except in a video game you're following someone else's model. In *Dungeons And Dragons* the player really gets to determine his or her path. In a video game there's only so much freedom you have since each world has rules and limits and sometimes even a set path.

I don't really think it's like that anymore. Today there are so many different possible ways to play certain games that that's half the fun of it. Sure it can take hundreds of hours to beat certain games, and there are actually games out there that cannot be won, but part of the excitement is to see exactly how the game plays out. Sometimes, yes, you have to follow a certain path, like in the new *Lord Of The Rings* game. But at the same time, what is challenging about that game is that there are many different options of how difficult the play is, what character you want to be, and based on that how interesting and exciting the game is. Sure someone else determined exactly what villains will be where and what weapons they will have, but fortunately there are so many games on the market. So, I just sold about 5 games to a friend, which is about \$250 worth of games. Now I can go buy a few more and get lost in them for a while, that's a pretty amazing idea. Especially considering that it's legal and completely safe, you know. I love playing shooting games, but I hate guns. Also, I have absolutely no interest in joining the army, I hate the idea of war, but I think I partly learned that from seeing what a soldier has to go through in video games. I mean, this way I can fight Iraqi soldiers without getting shot at, sitting through a sandstorm, getting hungry, or anything. Say what you will but the idea that someone can experience so many different stories and moods that each game creates without even having to leave their house is incredible. Sure a book may exercise different parts of your brain, but why do you think so many educational tools that they use in schools are being transferred to the form of video games? It's because they're fun, engaging, and because at this point every kid knows how to do it. Every kid in America knows how to use a Nintendo today—it's people's introduction to computers!

www.furtherseemsforever.com



THE PANTHERS



In New York, a new band is hyped to death every week. I've forgotten more "next big things" in the last six months than cigarettes I have smoked, and that, my friends, is one scary figure. Thank God for The Panthers, a real band that has the chops and songwriting skills to go toe to toe with any rock band in the country right now. Having honed their skills in such inspired bands as Orchid, Red Scare, and Pitchblende the boys know how to play, which is an unfortunate anomaly in the world of cliched retro New Wave. Their sound is a potent mix of bands like The MC5, The Stooges, with a touch of latter day rockers like At the Drive-In, and if you find yourself at a Panthers show you better be ready to dance 'cause the music is infectious. *Let's Get Serious*, The Panthers' follow up EP to last year's debut, *Are You Down?*, is an explosion of post punk ferocity and politics whipped into a boogie-rock stew that demands notice. The band deals with topics not often covered in today's ultra-trendy, socially unaware rock and roll world. Sixties radical leftist political groups, oft-mentioned approaches to sexuality and sex, and simply fucking shit up are all in a day's work for The Panthers. I met up with the four of the five Panthers (Jayson: vocals, Justin: guitar, Jeff: drums, and Kip: guitar) at Odessa in NYC for drinks and some good conversation. Among other topics covered were the co-option of the Brooklyn underground scene by MTV (unwittingly even) and how the idea that a boy might make out with another boy even if one of them has a girlfriend, is revolutionary in this Puritan age of the "compassionate conservatism." Enjoy.

I wanted to ask about the MTV2 promo!

Justin: Where'd you see that?

On MTV2.

Justin: It's still on?

It's on constantly. Usually when I come home I'll flip through the channels and invariably you guys will be on there.

Jayson: Well, our band was put together by MTV, and actually we met [at their studios], and we decided we all kind of have the look that is cool these days.

Justin: They had the gear and we all just started jamming.

Jayson: Yeah, and they were kind of like, "You guys should try to do this kind of thing," and they lead us along a little bit, it was cool. The auditions were really hard. They were in Florida, we were sweating 'cause it was so hot.

Jeff: Even though we're not as famous as O-town, we are still actually living as a band off of MTV.

Jayson: They were disappointed 'cause I gained a little weight and I was supposed to be the heart throb, since I'm the singer, and it just didn't go that way. They kind of let us go, but we had all their money.

I know there were rumors that you were going to work with the Neptunes.

Jayson: Well, that's still happening but it's more of a sexual relationship than a musical one. We get hot and bothered when we hear their Justin Timberlake song. [laughter]

Kip: People are going to be like, "Are you really funded by MTV?"

Jeff: Are they really living off of their royalties from their commercial?

Jayson: Seriously, we got like \$250 for that spot.

Jeff: And we just pooled all of the money and we used that to do our tour up the west coast.

Jayson: [The way it happened is] that a friend of ours worked at MTV2 doing on-screen graphics and initially they were like, "We're going to do this thing,

filming bands in their practice spaces, and they're not going to use any of your music they're just going to show you guys playing." And so that's what we thought it was. We thought it was like an MTV show, like, "bands from New York practice a new kind of rock" or whatever. They were going to have a rock band, a hip-hop, group and a soul group. So, I went in and they said we could do it. I don't think we even knew what it was for.

Jeff: Right until we got there.

Kip: We thought they were going to come to our practice with a TV camera and film us practicing but what ended up happening was we went in and went through wardrobe, makeup, catering.

Jayson: We actually rode in a bus to this practice space that wasn't really our practice space.

Justin: Which turned out to be next to the Turing Machine practice space.

Jeff: But they made it up inside and decorated it.

Jayson: It was designed by the woman from the Lunachicks, she works for MTV. She put Lunachicks paraphernalia up in the background and was like, "This is your practice space."

Jeff: There were like fifty people there helping out. The director, camera people, stylists, hair and makeup. It was crazy.

Were they like, "Give me attitude," or "Make love to the camera"?

Jeff: No, they were like "Scratch your back with your drumsticks." [laughter]

Justin: They were like, "Okay, unplug your guitar, plug it back in. Hmm, would you try [to do] that in a totally unique way like nobody else?"

Jayson: Kip played bass.

Kip: I looked more like a bass player, according to MTV.

Jeff: They were like, "Go on the couch and talk on your cell phone."

Jayson: Our [real] bass player, he pretended to hate it but he turned into fucking Mariah Carey as soon as he got there.

Jeff: He was a diva. He wouldn't talk to me for days. They loved him, they showed his face constantly.

Jayson: It's 'cause he looks like Jack Osbourne, they were used to him. He looks like somebody in At The Drive-In or something with his big hair.

That's understandable, but you guys are the face of rock for an entire generation, the kids watching the promo on their television don't know what you sound like, but—

Jayson: Neither does MTV! [laughter]

Justin: They were shocked that we were a real band. They figured it out halfway through the day. That's really true.

On another subject, you deal with a lot of sexual politics and that's not a topic that's generally broached in a serious way with post-punk bands. It is usually more veiled or a manifests itself in a more obscure take on the traditional love/romance songs. That's obviously something that's important to you.

Jayson: It is something that I've noticed not many bands talk about sexuality in a way that is subversive or interesting. I'm not saying that my lyrics are. I feel like my personal sexual experiences are something that I want to talk about. It's a political issue that people don't consider political or it's not as politicized as it used to be. I think it is really important and I wish more people did talk about it. Why do you think sex is music is so taboo? Either it's portrayed in a campy way—

Justin: Or it's the most overt thing you can possibly think of.

Jayson: I think people are weird about being honest about sexuality. I think that's a rock paradigm. To talk about sex it's very straight. Even being a

straight guy, when talking about sexuality I try to never use "he" and "she." I try to keep it either gender neutral or make it seem like it's the same gender. People are so strict about how they talk about it. I don't know why it's so taboo. You'll see the most conservative sexual politics in the most liberal punk rock band. That's one area of politics where people are brought up like, if I'm guy and I have a girlfriend, and when we're dating we don't make out with anybody else and we love each other. And then when we're in love we get married and have babies. And it's not that cut and dry ever. And everybody's constantly lying about it.

I think a lot of people in the indie rock scene feel guilty about being sexual, like it's offensive.

Justin: I was around for all of the indie rock stuff in the eighties and nineties and it was completely gender neutral. Like boys and girls, both separate and faux-innocent. I think everything right now is hyper-sexual, hyper-straight. All this terrible, weird red-board internet dating.

Justin: Like Make Out Club, it's like the opposite end of the spectrum.

Jayson: That stuff is dangerous and fucked up for other reasons. I feel like sexuality has been dealt with in the past, like in the way, way past and now there isn't anybody really, there's no kind of art that's honestly dealing with sexuality.

Justin: It's either a romantic comedy or the furthest to the other end of the spectrum that it could possibly be.

Jayson: So it's basically touching, like you're so far right, you're left. There isn't a lot of progressive writing, talking, art being made about sexuality that's forward-thinking. But what you think of as progressive, someone else might be like, "You're a crazy pervert."

Very true. Do you guys think that you guys are actively trying to engage your audience?

Jayson: How so? What do you mean?

Jeff: Like trying to have sex with them?

I mean, with the lyrics to your songs.

Jayson: What did Ghostface say? "Oh you're god damn right, I fuck fans!"

Jeff: I'm not trying to seduce people [with my music] if that's what you mean.

What about besides sexual politics?

Jayson: I definitely never write a song and think, "This is how I want people to understand it and take it and have it affect them." I write about something that is of interest to me at the time. And I tend to, in the lyrics, ask a lot of questions, and a lot of times I'm asking the questions to myself. Obviously, people will read it and the question will be to them. And obviously I would love for people to have it start them thinking. The thing I liked about the lyrics on the first record, as much as its been criticized, I wanted to take that over-the-top approach because it polarized people instantly, they had no choice but to think about their own politics, and how they responded to it.

Some people got really offended by your music.

Jayson: Because it accuses people, but it only accuses people who are guilty. If you read it and you are down with it, then you don't feel like you are accused.

Well we're all kind of guilty though.

Jayson: Like anything else it's making a division between the cool kids and the non-cool kids. No matter whether you're cool or not you always want to identify with the cool kids. If they're like, "Man I hate it when nerds do this," even if you do it you're like, "Yeah I hate that shit too." But that kind of black and white really polarizes people. It's not something I'm going to do again. ☐

WORDS: ROSS SIEGEL





THE KILLS

For Hotel of The Kills, being a rockstar is more of a bother than a pleasure. I mean, look at Lou Reed these days. Rockstars suck.

For some reason, every time I told people The Kills would be in the next issue of *Law of Inertia*, they'd look at me like I'd just killed my own child. "I thought you hated The Yeah Yeah Yeahs and The White Stripes," they'd say. But I'd shake my head and offer: "No, The Kills are so much better. Please don't lump them into that crowd." Sure The Kills play stripped-down, lo-fi rock and roll with an edge like so many others these days. Sure they only count a singer and a guitarist among their permanent roster. But, in The Kill's debut full-length, *Keep On Your Mean Side*, released in April on Rough Trade, we see a brooding, moody, get-the-fuck-out-of-the-way performance from these two kids who call Britain—not Detroit or Brooklyn—home. So far they've reaped the rewards of this newfound rock and roll fetish America's youth are going through. So much so that one might dub The Kills The White Stripes of the UK.

Allison, aka VV, formerly of Florida pop-punk outfit Discount, and her cohort Hotel are a great band that, quite simply, sound nothing like The Strokes. They're much better, in fact. I recently got a chance to sit down with Hotel and talk about exactly what kind of rockstar he wishes to be. The truth is he aligns himself far more with Fugazi's way of approaching their fans than he does with Jack White's.

Have you been doing a ton of press lately?
No, I've done one interview.

Why not much?

Well, we've done quite a lot of interviews in Europe, but we've only done a little bit in the States. I think we're protective of what we do and we're particular about who we choose to do interviews with. I don't think we ever wanted to do a scatter-gun approach.

I wonder what The Strokes would say about that, 'cause they do interviews everywhere you look.

That's funny, I was out with Nick from the Strokes last night. They're lovely guys. I don't know whether it's that people are used to seeing them out or if people just don't recognize them, but people left him alone. If there were admirers then I didn't notice it.

Are The Strokes supportive of your band?

Yeah, we met them at the Leeds festival last year. We saw them play and met them afterwards. Last night we were with a guy named Nigel Godrich who is a guy I've known for three or four years. He's a great guy, and by now everyone knows he produces Radiohead's records. He basically used to be a T-boy in the studio and he worked his way up and became an assistant engineer. He was engineering on a Radiohead record and they just totally loved him and felt that he put a lot more into it than the big-shot producer. So when their record went sky-high they asked Nigel to produce their stuff from then on. That's pretty much where he got his break.

Are you guys going to work with him?

Not at this stage. I don't think that we're confident enough with our sound and our music to bring in Nigel. He's a bit more professional than how we usually record.

The Radiohead stuff he does is so huge and your stuff is so stripped down.

He could do it. He isn't the type of producer who makes everything into an opera. I'd love to work with him at some point. But it was funny going out with Nigel and Nick and having them both be totally laid back. Nigel is a little bit too grounded if you ask me. He could stand to be a bit less humble. [laughter] He's kind of embarrassed of his success, it's like, "dude, you're Nigel Godrich, shut up!"

Do you think that British musicians or people in the British media world are better at toning down their egos than American celebrities?

In a general sense yeah, but I don't think it's a good thing sometimes. There's a sense in British music where there's a kind of "down to earth" movement, which is pretty self-explanatory. But I don't think it's particularly healthy for the legend of music. It's almost like they try so hard to do things that normal people do and be like small musicians that it seems a little disingenuous. It just seems a little contrary to what rockstars are known to be and therefore I wonder if the fact that you can see football stars at your local chips shop may be trying too hard to create an image of being down to earth.

Would you like musicians to be larger than life?

Not necessarily. I mean, it's fun to put your favorite musicians up on a pedestal, and when you are face to face with them they sometimes disappoint you. But, I'm a massive Velvet Underground fan. I like that whole thing where they were a celebration of music and art and culture. Some people think that's synonymous with pretension, and I'd like to smash that feeling. I think that music shouldn't be purely auditory, but rather an explosion of all things artistic.

Well, Allison does all the art on all her records, right?

We both do the artwork for Kills records. That was the thing that gelled us really. We were both doing music and art all day every day before we even met. So it was kind of like we had found kindred spirits in each other. We didn't really have to change anything when we started The Kills.

So you guys are starting to get a lot of notoriety in the UK and Europe?

I guess. I don't want to play it down, but when you're in a band and on the road it's kind of hard to gauge that type of thing. We do a lot of shows and people will say, "You guys are doing so well, everyone is talking about you." It's quite humbling, but confusing at the same time."

Is your next goal to conquer The States?

I really just love coming to America, I love playing here and being here. To be able to play music and be part of some scene would be an important achievement for us. It's far more important to us than selling lots of records and saturating the marketplace. We'd rather be relevant.

How do you do that? How do you carve out your own niche when just the fact that you're playing two-piece rock and roll automatically puts you in league with The Strokes, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, and the White Stripes?

I don't know. We feel different than those types of bands because of our outlook on how we want to present ourselves. We don't do tons of press, we don't want to sign to some big, heartless corporate label. We're not interested in raising our profile or anything.

Would you like to be sort of a Lou Reed figure ten years from now?

No, I don't want to be Lou Reed. He's a total dick. He was a dick in '65 and he's a dick now. It was always John Cale that held that band together for me. He had a real avant-garde vision, and that's what made them great. Lou Reed just wanted to write pop songs and be like the Beach Boys or something.

Ten years from now if The Kills are still doing stuff, who would you like to model yourself after?

I don't know. Maybe Steve Reich, and so some really difficult drone music that people don't generally like. By then I'd probably be irrelevant or boring, so why not do what I wanted to do.

www.thekills.tv



"We tried to do it in a really non-obvious way. In a way that wasn't obnoxious. I mean the pop songs you hear on the radio are so catchy and geared towards being number-one that the catchiness is obnoxious. People are just turned off by it. I hope that's not the case with this record." Cave In frontman Stephen Brodsky is of course referring to the band's latest album and major label debut, *Antenna*.

In spite of the recent jump from indie powerhouse Hydra Head to the world of bottom line obsessed A&R's at their new label, RCA Records, Brodsky and the rest of the band seem as confident as they've ever been in anything they've done. They have to be. Streamlining their sound from a balls-out tech-metal machine to space rock quartet over the past three years has been no simple feat for this Boston based group. In the span of time that it takes many bands to write, record, and tour for an album, Cave In has managed to cover more musical ground than the new arrivals section at a downtown New York City hipster record store. Transforming into a completely new, fresh and original face amongst their fellow indie and hardcore contemporaries, all in the public eye, and much to the dismay and chagrin of some fans, the band persevered and did it their way to the end. I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Cave In at guitarist Adam's McGrath's house in their hometown of Boston and talk with them on where they've been, where they're at, and where they see the band going in the future. Topics covered ranged from pretending they're Slipknot to underground British wrestling.

Their story begins in a sleepy Boston suburb. In a dingy basement the foundation—for what would go on to come to be known as Cave In—was formed. Barely out of elementary algebra, the members, all still in their glorious high school years, began banging out some of the fiercest hardcore/metal crossover this side of Slayer's *South Of Heaven*. Along with fellow Bostonians Converge (of which Brodsky was briefly a member), and other kindred spirits Botch and Coalesce, Cave In's patented brand of fierce and in-your-face metal, replete with odd time signatures and out of left-field phrasing, set the tone for progressive heavy music in the latter half of the nineties. Soon after they formed the band attracted the attention of metal guru Aaron Turner of Isis/Hydrahead Records fame, thus beginning a partnership that would produce two of the genre's defining achievements, the albums *Beyond Hypothermia* and *Until Your Heart Stops*.

Countless tours with a virtual who's who of the aggressive music world

soon followed. However, as soon as these guys had come to define a sound, they were quick to dismiss it. Bits and pieces of psychedelic meanderings began to find their way in between fist-pumping double bass-pedal blast beats and vocals that made sandpaper feel like satin. Guitarist Adam McGrath comments, "I think we grew tired of being pigeonholed as a metal band. It was a very uninspiring environment to be caught in all the time. I'm not going to generalize, but when we changed our sound we had a lot of people screaming obscenities at us." Brodsky adds "There were hints of the direction we were going in here and there, but

I think people were too psyched about the Slayer ripoffs to really catch on." After thumbing through McGrath's record collection, and seeing the Flamin' Groovies sandwiched between Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* and Converge, it's hard to believe the band didn't have that in them from the start. *Jupiter*, which was unleashed on the public in 2000, marked a defining stylistic turning point for the band. The blasting guitar attack was traded in for a Moogerfooger delay and a rack of vintage effects. Goodbye Slayer, hello Swervedriver.

In the face of adversity from long time fans and detractors alike, the band has gone from young metal upstarts in the Boston hardcore scene—the same scene that spawned Isis and Converge—to being hyped as the next Radiohead by many critics. While all too many of their contemporaries who have taken the major label route recently have opted to take the easy way out, making easy-to-digest pop calamities, *Antenna*, is anything but that, taking cues from influences as diverse as Radiohead, King Crimson, Quicksand, and Pink Floyd. The record shouldn't come as any sort of surprise for fans who have watched the group grow over the past few years. In fact, starting with 1999's *Creative Eclipses* every release has felt like a departure from its predecessor. Brodsky comments: "The music is a little more geared towards an immediate live response where as playing the songs off of [2000's] *Jupiter* really threw people off, not only because the sound was a little different, but also because the songs were a little more inaccessible than our previous stuff." So far this approach has paid off well. The band was recently hand-picked by Dave Grohl to open select dates on a recent Foo Fighters tour, thus exposing Cave In to hordes of new fans who may have otherwise never heard of them. And the response has been spectacular.

Making the jump to the world of major label recording budgets after years of toiling in the hardcore underground, tracking records for next to nothing has been a treat for the group. The band were afforded the opportunity with this album to work with a big name producer, Rich Costey, whose resume includes everyone from Rage Against The Machine to minimalist composer Phillip Glass. While the group was given every musician's wet dream, the opportunity and budget to test out a wide range of vintage effects pedals, amplifier cabinets, and guitars, there were also drawbacks. Brodsky said, "There's no worry that any of the guitars are out of tune because half the time was just spent tuning guitars and making sure that they're all perfectly in tune with each other. There's no question that the performances are there, everything is played as good as it possibly can be to inhuman degrees. The minuses are that there's possibly a slight loss of emotion or an overbearing sense of labor that went into it and less of a 'hey we just banged this out in four days' type of vibe. I definitely got sick of just playing the same riff for hours." McGrath adds "You definitely don't get any sort of emotional headspace when you're playing a riff over and over and over again, or recording something for the third or fourth time with a different amp."

This brings up an interesting point. In an interview conducted recently by yours truly with everyone's favorite black, white, and red all over rock band The White Stripes, head stripe Jack White made comments to the effect that modern recording technology is the devil and is killing music one overdubbed album at a time.

Surely this isn't the case. *Antenna* indeed proves this claim wrong. Rife with overdubs, sound collages, and layers upon layers of guitars, *Antenna* bridges the gap between analog effects and modern recording techniques better than anyone on this side of the Atlantic.

At this point the conversation launches into a debate on whether or not digital cut and paste does indeed cause a loss of emotion. To this Brodsky offers, "Ultimately it's what makes a good record. Is the music good? Are the songs good quality? Are the performances good? I mean, yeah it's something that can be abused and that's why so much contemporary pop music sounds so manufactured and linear is that it often is abused. In our case we used it just like any other recording machine and it just made things a little easier and happen a little quicker."

Love it or hate it, Cave In have taken advantage of the opportunities and technology given to them and have come out strong with *Antenna*, their fourth full-length. More sonically textured than anything the band has ever done thus far, *Antenna* should prove to be an album which, similar to fellow odd-balls Radiohead, will stand on its artistic merit, rather than its hooks alone.

For a group on the cusp of breaking through from underground phenomena to the big leagues, Cave In appear to be quite calm about the whole thing. They've been around the world several times over, have gone from playing basement hardcore shows to opening for mega rock stars such as the A Perfect Circle and Foo Fighters—who they are gearing up to tour with again very soon—and have a video set to be added into rotation on MTV this summer. This has remarkably been done when the band is barely old enough to legally kick back and have a beer. So where do they picture themselves going now? Brodsky sees it this way: "We'll take it as far as we can go until we're broke and have no fans." To this McGrath adds, "We're already broke so I guess we're half way there." If the new album and recent live responses are any indication, it shouldn't be too long before Cave In's interstellar epic sound seeps into the collective mainstream consciousness. And to answer the burning question on everyone's mind, will any pre-*Jupiter* material find its way into the set, Brodsky concludes, "We've become lazy. It's not in our wrists. We don't have the heavy metal in our wrists anymore."

Cave In's new album, *Antenna*, is available now on RCA Records.

www.cavein.net

RAMBO III

With a wall of heavily armed Russian soldiers ahead of him, and the blazing hot Afghani sun beating down upon his massively scarred chest, John Rambo prepares for the unthinkable. His only friend, Richard Crenna, stands next to him. He calmly asks, "Well, what do you say, John?" With a snarl and a grunt, John Rambo responds: "FUCK 'EM." Thus begins the final act of RAMBO III, an all out, go for broke tribute to world peace that makes one point painfully clear: they don't make action movies like they used to.

We first met John Rambo in 1982 in the poetically subtle *First Blood*. John returns home from a tour of duty in Vietnam only to be harassed by the town sheriff, Brian Dennehy. Rambo flips out, blows some shit up, and eventually has an emotional breakdown that some could argue was not in English. He cries. He drools. His lips contort in numerous directions.

Leap ahead a few years and we have *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, which finds our verbally challenged hero being asked to free American POW's from the jungles of Vietnam. This leads to more carnage, more things blowing up and, yes, more emotional outbursts. The highlight: Rambo shoots an arrow into a Vietcong's chest and then he explodes. And if the line, "Murdock, I'm coming to get you," doesn't send chills down your ass crack, then obviously you're unfamiliar with this piece of '80's pop culture.

This leads us to *Rambo III*, the most ridiculous of the series and co-written by Stallone himself. The film opens with John Rambo living in Thailand in search of inner peace. On top of rebuilding monasteries, Rambo also engages in stick fighting brawls to earn money for the local monks. Everything seems perfect in Rambo's quaint little life until an old friend shows up. That's right, Richard Crenna.

Crenna approaches Rambo and explains to him the plot of this third installment. The Russians have invaded Afghanistan and are slaughtering people left and right.

The U.S. is sending a shipment of stinger missiles to a small rebel force so that they can further defend themselves against the invading Russians. Crenna's going in, along with a few other elderly Marines, to make sure the missiles get there, and he wants Rambo to join him. "My war's over," proclaims Mr. Rambo. Crenna goes in anyway, and in a shocking turn of events, is instantly captured. Who decides to go in and save him? That's right, John Rambo.

The first was for himself. The second was for his country. This time it's to save a friend. Sweet.

Rambo III is full of memorable moments, from the opening shot of Rambo spinning towards the camera, creating one of the most awkward glamour shots of all time, to the first break in attempt on the well protected Russian

fortress that Crenna's being held in. The scene concludes with Rambo holding a wounded child, possibly a young Osama Bin Laden, over his left shoulder while blasting away useless Russians with a machine gun. Rambo even finds time during the film to toss around a dead sheep, which looks strikingly similar to a stuffed animal, as well as show off his super speed when he out runs a low flying helicopter. However, among the many memorable moments, two in particular stand out. The first involves a makeshift operation that Rambo performs on himself. After leaping out of the way of a rocket, Rambo discovers that a hunk of wood is lodged just left of his kidney. Instead of pulling the wood out, he pushes it deeper into his body, apparently missing major organs, and out the other end, creating a second wound. He then dumps gun powder into the wound and lights it on fire. Mass lip contorting ensues as flames leap out of his midsection. Kick ass.

Soon, we come to the second most hysterical moment in the film. While fighting a Russian soldier twice his size, the Russian gets our hero into a bear hug, which leads to intense grimacing and lip contorting, and it looks as if Rambo's done for. Yet somehow, Rambo fights back. He tosses a rope around the Russkie's neck, pulls out the pin of a grenade that dangles from his chest, and kicks him into a cave. The Russian drops, snaps his neck, and explodes. Nothing shouts American pride like an exploding Russian soldier.

Which takes us to the final showdown. After ten minutes of Rambo running around like a spastic five year old, and everything in sight exploding, he finds himself in the cockpit of a tank.

Straight ahead of him is the leader of the Russian army, who for some reason has a problem flying his helicopter more than three feet above ground. The two commence in a game of chicken.

The chopper, and the tank, speed towards one another. Rambo screams. The Russian screams back. The two collide. Who survives? Take a shot in the dark.

Rambo III concludes with a dedication

to the

"gallant people of

Afghanistan." Somebody

once told me those same gallant people would later become the Taliban. They even tried convincing me that John

Rambo's next (straight to video) mission was to help out Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran, this time being asked to deliver much needed weapons of mass destruction to aid the cause. Now I don't read too often, or make any attempts to keep up with current events, but those opinions sound a little far fetched to me. Why would our country bomb the shit out of the same "gallant" people Rambo saved? And why would the U.S. ever help Saddam? Didn't we bomb the crap out of his country, too? Next thing you know, people will be claiming we're allies with those damn Commie bastards. It just doesn't make sense.

That aside, *Rambo III* still stands as a kick ass action flick that should not go over looked. If anyone tells you differently, remember these words of advice: FUCK 'EM! ☐



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KILL YOUR RADIO: 1

Matt of Shai Hulud reviews the top ten records that influenced him to play hard....



Bad Brains "I Against I"

I once listed *I Against I* as an album I would bring with me on a desert island while filling out a job application to a local record shop. That still applies. If there has ever been a timeless album, this is it. With the perfect blend of rock and metal guitar, and soothing and piercing vocals, the badass Soul Brains practically created the underground bible for all heavy independent bands that have ever recorded anything worth listening to. That's right ladies and gents, Bad Brains' *I Against I* is not to be fucked with.

Ask just about any of the musicians you admire—if they know anything about anything, they will tell you the same. (SST: 1986)



Burn self-titled EP

Who can truly say what band was the first to bring metal into hardcore? Many bands did it successfully. Nonetheless, out of all the late-80's/early-90's hardcore bands, Burn, in my opinion, fused the two immaculately, forming the first, truest, and most musically and vocally creative and substantial metalcore unit anyone had heard up until that point—and still one of the most unique and influential to this day. With impeccable song structuring, glorious guitar melody, lyrics with depth and substance,

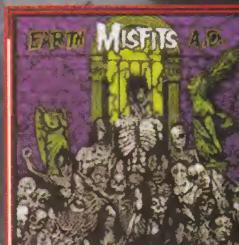
and the combination of Chaka's unmistakably passionate growl and clever vocal phrasings, Burn redefined hardcore and paved the way for bands that weren't just content with pounding away on old-school punk beats and power chords. [Bands like] Burn don't come around that often, but when they do, they give genres facelifts. When they take their leave, a big hole is left and it is rarely, if ever, refilled. (Revelation: 1990)

Cover Not Available

JFA "Untitled / Mad Garden"

Whenever I mention JFA as one of my influences, I get one of two responses: 1) J-who?; and/or 2) You're kidding. Oh boy. For those not familiar with the band: JFA stands for Jodie Foster's Army, and they were quite the rage in the mid-eighties, and deservedly so. When I first heard *Untitled / Mad Garden*, I loved it for the raw hardcore/punk album it is. However, what really drew me to this album and band was the incorporation of melody and surf-influenced rock into their brand of unpolished

skatecore. JFA sloppily pounded and surf rocked their way into my heart. Between their original material and brilliant choice of covers, JFA was one of the reasons I picked up a guitar and attempted writing hardcore songs with emotion. (Placebo: 1984)



The Misfits "Earth AD"

Remember when music scared you? When I first heard *Earth AD* I swear, I thought The Misfits were going to come through my ghetto blaster and rip out my intestines, knock out my teeth, gouge out my eyes, bathe in my blood, and piss all over my shredded carcass. Being more renowned for their punk anthems, the brutal hardcore that is *Earth AD* is usually fans' least beloved, and the most overlooked Misfits album. This was the first I heard of the band and it is still my favorite to this day. *Earth AD* has little regard for musical or technical prowess. Rip. Kill. Shred—who cares about feedback and tuning guitars anyway? This is a beautifully severe album, and it has the distinction of being what I believe one of the most violent ever. "Death Comes Ripping"? "Demonomania"? "We Bite"? Cannibal Corpse ain't got nothing on *Earth AD*. (Caroline: 1984)



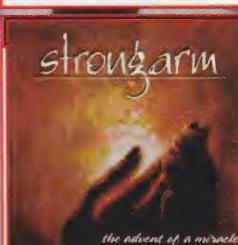
Metallica "Ride the Lightning"

If you do not acknowledge *Ride the Lightning* as the best metal album ever written, you have only one way to redeem yourself: acknowledging *Master of Puppets* as the best metal album ever written. There are no other options. Sorry. Any other answer is wrong. So very wrong. I get emotional about Metallica. They are the undisputed, consummate metal band and are mostly responsible for everything above average in heavy metal. Beg to differ? Save it. You are wrong. So very wrong. (Elektra: 1984)



Propagandhi "Today's Empires... Tomorrow's Ashes"

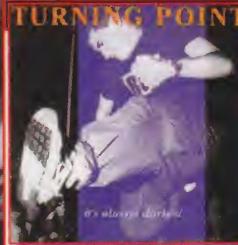
An album from 2002 in my top ten? Who'da thunk it? This is the album that will remind you why you loved punk/hardcore/metal to begin with. Not unlike their earlier efforts, but progressed, and with an extra pinch of pissed, *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes* is smart, cohesive, and thoroughly effective—musically, lyrically, emotionally (I can barely contain myself upon hearing "Bullshit Politicians") and intellectually (it can make you feel like a downright ignoramus at times). At 28 years of age I even wrote them a fan letter, and I don't do that. *Today's Empires...* is simply the result of thinking musicians with something to say, making music for no other reasons than the right ones. (Fat Wreck Chords: 2000)



Strongarm "Advent Of A Miracle"

Let's get this out of the way right now: yes, Strongarm was an unabashed Christian band. If that bothers you enough to not give this album a listen, it is truly your loss. I will go as far as saying *Advent Of A Miracle* is my favorite metalcore album of all time, not to mention, shamefully the most underrated and ignored. Why is this my favorite? No, I am not a Christian. Here's why, aside from the fact mama didn't raise no fool: brilliant song writing, flawless execution, heartfelt lyrics, gut-blowing vocals, and song

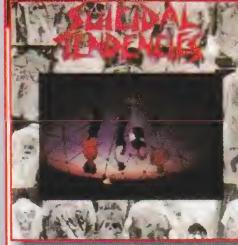
structuring so clever, even Mozart is left quizzically scratching his head—that's why. *Advent of a Miracle* is simply as smart and mature as it gets in metalcore. It surfaced in a scene that did not want it, and still made an impact—even on those who disagreed with their spiritual views. Anyone with a true passion for aggressive music acknowledges *Advent...* for its brilliance and overwhelming passion and integrity. (Solid State: 1997)



Turning Point "It's Always Darkest..."

Turning Point started out the same as many of their contemporaries in the 1980's, but they rose above the pack. Not only does *It's Always Darkest...* sound better than the average old school hardcore album, it also offers a bit more to the fans that musically needed something a little smarter and deeper than the glut of XJohnnyHardcoreX albums that flooded the market at the time. It's not what I would call a groundbreaking album, but it definitely touched upon great ideas that were

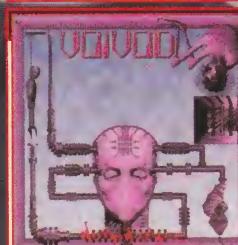
expanded upon by bands that followed their lead. In fact, I credit Turning Point as being one of the bands that was responsible for prompting Shai Hulud to actually start writing material like "This Wake I Myself Have Stirred," the first Hulud song ever written. (New Age: 1990)



Suicidal Tendencies self-titled

This first Suicidal album is undoubtedly one of the primary reasons I started playing hardcore. The first time I heard this classic album's opening song "Suicide's an Alternative/You'll be Sorry" kick in, I knew I had found home. The combination of the rapid dual vocal attack on top of what I thought at the time was the fastest and hardest beat I ever heard, absolutely floored me, and every song that followed had the same effect (Save "I Saw Your Mommy" which even in my early teens seemed

a bit tacky to me). This album, for all intents and purposes, was my introduction to hardcore. Thanks to Suicidal and this album, for many years to come, hardcore became the genre of music I mostly explored. (Frontier: 1983)



Voivod "Nothingface"

Voivod has run the musical gamut—playing everything from thrashy punk to brutal metal to radio-friendly prog rock. I love it all, but *Nothingface* is my favorite. Without going into a lengthy dissertation, I will simply say this band is without a doubt one of the most unique bands to play in the metal genre. It is almost impossible to describe Voivod or why I love them. You either feel it, or you don't. Obviously, I feel it; quite a bit in fact. The first time I heard the melody-driven chorus in the song *Nothingface*

I remember thinking to myself, "I would mosh so hard to this part." I still credit it for being one of the primary reasons I started incorporating melody into the music I write. (MCA: 1989)

The Blood Brothers review their favorite 9 records of all time....



Behead the Prophet "I Am That Great And Fiery..."

I have yet to hear a band that comes close to sounding as insane as Behead the Prophet. I'm not talking about them in a guitar god, masturbate-all-over-your-fretboard kind of way. No, everything about this band was frenetic, loosely organized chaotic energy. My favorite songs would have to be: "Separated States," "Insane Tank Driver," and "Welcome to the New Killer Bees." Brilliant. I think the best part about BTP was the total lack of barrier between band and audience, both literally and figuratively. The band rarely played on a stage, and on the rare occasion a stage was provided, the archaic concept of band playing to a room of spectators was usurped by an open invitation to join in. I'm still waiting for them to get back together. (Outpunk: 1996)- by Jordan Blilie

Cover Not Available

Death Wish Kids "There's Nothing In School..."

Really, the title of this record alone should be enough. It took me dropping out of college five years after this album's release to fully grasp that what they were saying was absolutely true, and it still remains one of the most inspiring records I've heard. What struck me most the first time I heard it was that, unlike the primarily testosterone-driven, deep growls prevalent in many of the hardcore/punk bands I had heard prior, Andrea's was a high-pitched, raspy scream that managed to evoke ten times

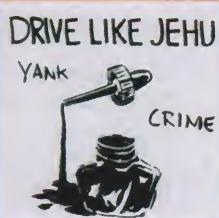
the emotion/energy. When she sang, "Don't patronize me, I'll fuck your shit up," you knew she was entirely serious. To me, this band still remains the ideal model of what a punk band should sound like: lo-fi, aggressive, catchy, and completely honest. (?)- by Jordan Blilie



Nirvana "Nevermind"

One of the most influential bands that I can think of would have to be Nirvana. At the time when this album was released I was in the fifth or sixth grade, just learning how to play guitar by listening to bands like Motley Crue and Skid Row. The second that I heard the single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" I stopped playing songs like "Louie Louie" and switched to a more raw and dirty sound. When I was exposed to this album my eyes were opened to a whole new community of music that I never new existed. At the

time I didn't realize that Dave Grohl's drumming would have any impact on me, but looking back now the way he pounded on those fucking drums made me want to pound just as hard when I picked up my first pair of drum sticks. (Geffen: 1991)- by Mark Gajadhar



Drive Like Jehu "Yank Crime"

Another album that plays a huge role in my style of drumming is *Yank Crime*. I don't know how I stumbled across this record, but once I heard it I listened to it 24-7. The drumming is amazing but not fancy. Mark Trombino's tinkering was very tasteful and that was the reason why I was so into it. There is this snare drum roll that goes on for a minute or so then turns in to this beat with just kick and snare, that's so fucking cool. When I first started playing drums this was the album that I listened to, which means that was I ripped off

Mark Trombino until I figured out my own style of playing. I must say I couldn't have picked a better drummer to model myself after. (Interscope: 1994)- by Mark Gajadhar



The Jesus Lizard "Shot"

It's debatable, but I think this is their overall best record. After I heard this record I went out and bought all their other records and I listened to them while I was delivering pizzas. The Jesus Lizard are a prime example of the perfect relationship between drums, bass, guitar, and vocals. At first listen it sounds like David Yow is spouting some drunken gibberish, but as I read his lyrics and caught wind of what he was saying I realized that he was telling some very interesting stories on behalf of the wife beaters, drunks, and co-dependents of the world. The guitar and bass have this coexistence going on that I really love from them. They act as equals but they don't get in the way of each other, angular and solid. Unfortunately for me I never got to see them live but they will nevertheless remain one of my top influences. (Capitol: 1996)- by Morgan Henderson

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Soldier "Prangtangle"

What can I say about this band? It's very hard to describe this band to the end that I would like to. Coming out of the late '90's electro/grunge scene in Seattle, this band greatly influenced the way that I play the keyboard and how I think of samples being used in music. It was all really built on textures and volume. They were heavy, loud, and fun to dance to. Kind of like if you mixed Harkonen with Kraftwerk. They recorded one record and did a tour in Europe then they split up. Live, there was no way to avoid dancing and screaming along, just what I love out of a band. (?)- by Morgan Henderson



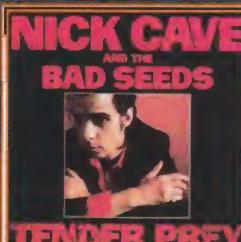
Drive Like Jehu "self-titled"

This one was a toss up between two really important bands to me. Jawbreaker's *24 Hour Revenge Therapy* and Drive Like Jehu's self-titled album were two of the first albums that ever really floored me as a kid. I remember the very first time I heard Drive Like Jehu. I was still padded up in my pee-wee football gear, if you can believe that, and had just returned from another "grueling" practice. My brother and his friend were in the kitchen with a boom box listening to something that I had never heard before. Keep in mind, that my main household names up to this point had pretty much consisted of Pearl Jam, Dr. Dre, Nirvana, and Tony! Toni! Ton! Anyhow, the record they were listening to was Drive Like Jehu's *Yank Crime*, and it hit me right away. Upon listening to it some more, I picked up their early album which is the topic here. Needless to say, it really hit me hard. There was so much going on that album that I couldn't even fully comprehend at the time, and still probably can't. It was the first time I had ever heard a band playing a style of music where the first time you listen to it you don't know what you just heard, but you know you liked it and are going to love it. It excited the hell out of me and I couldn't get enough. I must have listened to it every day throughout junior high, letting it all soak in. It is fairly apparent on *This Adultery Is Ripe*, that I listened to them. When I go back and listen to this record, I always notice something new that was way inspired by them. I'll always be inspired by that band and will never forget how much they meant to me. (Headhunter: 1991)- by Cody Votolato



Dead Kennedys "Plastic Surgery Disasters"

Dead Kennedys was the first punk band I ever really got into, in junior high. I listened to them probably every single day. The thing that is most compelling to me about this record is the lyrics, because they present very pertinent social and political issues in a way that's not preachy or contrived. "Trust Your Mechanic" is a good example of this. The song takes the concept of being ripped-off by mechanics and expands it into a very perceptive commentary: the function of things within society such as fashion magazines or psychiatrists is to tell people how to feel about themselves, and that to put complete trust in these things is often emotional suicide. Besides all this, the record is really kick ass, definitely something to pass on to a little brother or sister who is just getting into punk rock. (Alternative Tentacles: 1982)- by Johnny Whitney



Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds "Tender Prey"

I listened to this record a lot when we were writing/recording *This Adultery Is Ripe*. The way that Nick Cave sings—not exactly his voice, obviously our voices (mine high, his low) are not very similar, his inflection and the presentation I drew a lot from when trying to figure out how I wanted to sing in the Blood Brothers. His lyrics are often very visual and plot/story driven, which also contributed a lot to the way I write in The Blood Brothers. Songs like "Dianna" (a song about two kids who sneak

into rich people's houses while they are at church) and "Up Jumped The Devil" (a lot of visual elements to this song, "I was born on the day that my poor mama died, I was cut from her belly with a Stanley knife, my daddy did a jig with the drunk midwife") were highly influential when coming up with lyrics for *Adultery*. (Mute: 1998)- by Johnny Whitney

KILL YOUR RADIO: 3

Archer Prewitt of Sea and Cake reviews "the top ten records of all time...."



Marvin Gaye "What's Going On"

An unparalleled soul classic. From beginning to end a beautifully conceived masterpiece that I have worshipped since childhood. Its haunting echo-laden grooves propelled by the masterful James Jamerson lift the spirit like other-wordly gospel music. I used to listen to this album with a good songwriter friend and we'd alternately yell and fall into reverential silence when Marvin pleads, "Save the babies!" I have to choose my times to listen to this record because of its profound effect. Hearing multiple

Marvins is awe-inspiring. (Universal: 1971)



Van Morrison "Veedon Fleece"

I love this record and *Astral Weeks*. Great songs, a great voice with an open-ended, slippery musical backdrop. Seamless aural bliss. Chillingly raw vocals—uncompromising, joyous, enraged, mournful and deeply soulful. This record tightens the throat. Listening to his voice is like watching a bird in flight. It's a tightrope walk experience that quickens the heart. "Come Here My Love" could be the greatest love song ever written, and "Country Fair" always brings a tear to my eye. You can take the boy

out of the country.... (Warner Bros. 1974)



Neil Young "Harvest"

I know that there are many great Neil Young records that aren't so universally praised, but I have to stand by my love for this album. *After The Goldrush* and *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* are equally loved and on a given day may take precedence. The dynamic arrangements and brutally humble production (save the ambitious "A Man Needs A Maid" and "There's A World") coupled with Young's homely/gorgeous whine of a voice is a masterstroke. The dramatic obliteration of applause at the

end of "The Needle And The Damage Done" is a whiplash that drops the incendiary "Words" like a bomb. A great moment. Every song is a beautifully crafted jewel. Young's guitar is gigantic and gloriously reckless. The Stray Gators with Jack Nitzsche on piano and the very spare Kenny Buttrey on drums are just too damn good. A milestone of a record. It can never be fully absorbed and dispensed with, it always has more to give. (Warner Bros.: 1972)



Leonard Cohen "Songs From A Room"

This record demands quiet and stillness. It sits you down. My God, what artistry. It's confounding. The conversational limitations of Cohen's voice are perfectly suited to his crafted lyrics and each song seems a short story. Bob Johnston's production is flawless, spare and inventive. The indelible melodies seem culled from the collective unconscious; as if they've always existed. And I love the story the back cover photo tells. (Columbia: 1969)



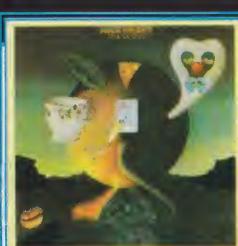
Scott Walker "Scott 4"

I was floored by this record when I first heard it. I thought the creator must be a madman. The voice of Scott Walker is so expressive, so masterful as to cause pain to hear it. It is at once vulnerable, poetic and intellectually confident (arrogant?). His vision and personal demands separate him from most everyone in popular music as a truly unique genius. One has to get around the knee-jerk assumption that all of it is schmaltz and bombast. Nothing could be further from the truth. This was Scott's first solo album of all original material and it's monumental. All the albums are great but this one is my favorite. (Polygram: 1969)



The Moles "Instinct"

Essentially a Richard Davies solo album. This disarming oddity drew me in with its first chordal trumpet blasts. I truly believe that Davies is one of the most melodically creative and lyrically interesting artists around. Or is he around? Where is he? A lawyer now, I hear. Damn! This is an elemental freak of an album. A very exciting listen, as always with his work. There is an intelligent aggression and melancholy (as well as a healthy dose of humor) woven into his opaque lyrics. You hear it in his voice too. You get a sense of the restlessness of someone who is never to be understood. There is a poetic darkness over this record that is singularly Davies'. And while the Cardinal record is fantastic, I think this surpasses it hands down. (Flydaddy: 1994)



Nick Drake "Pink Moon"

So rich a record made all the more perfect by its spare production. The choice to record the voice and guitar without adornment seems born of self-deprecating depression and humility. A bleak quality of resignation hovers in each song, and still on the whole it is an uplifting and very spiritually moving album. Best listened to alone. Or in the tour van while everyone is quiet and tired. Drake's voice and singular "piano-style" fingerpicking are transcendent. What songs! No more commercials, please. (Island: 1972)



Plush "More Becomes You"

Like Nick Drake's *Pink Moon*, this great album draws its power from superlative songs sung beautifully with primarily solo piano accompaniment. Liam Hayes is an underground genius, pure and simple. The chordal complexity hints at orchestral grandeur as each song languidly slips into the next like a perfectly conceived suite. And his laughter allows for earthly failings and pleasure when he doesn't quite hit a soaring note, only to be followed immediately by a multi-voiced triumph. One of many magical moments on this classic. A must have. His new *Fed* album is completely on fire. Someone should take the risk and release it in the U.S. (Drag City: 1998)



The Velvet Underground "self-titled"

The ragged brilliance of this seminal record is timeless. There's a slight smile to Lou Reed's words. The music is chugging, barely restrained and joyously dark. Never precious. Even the pretty "Femme Fatale" with Nico's disaffected lisp of a vocal is slightly out of tune and loose-limbed. "All Tomorrow's Parties" with its rolling staccato piano drone is absolutely majestic. Nico's voice was a perfect choice. It's a perfect recording. I love the unbridled fury that explodes after the sound of breaking glass on "European Son." The low budget sound assault must have shocked many a listener when released. I'm a big fan of Mo Tucker's drum style. The lopsided galloping beat on the mesmerizing "Heroin" occupies a murky sonic space that acts as a racing heart beat threatening to break the whole song apart. I like how this band alternately feels like it's revealing all its raw beauty with something of its back turned to you. I'll always return to this. (Polygram: 1967)



The Beatles "Revolver"

My God, this is a great record. Way ahead of its time in every respect. Always disturbingly fresh and ringing—a strident testimony to the genius of The Beatles. And George Martin and Geoff Emerick. These are flawless songs performed flawlessly and with exacting energy. Deceptively spare arrangements, great tunes, powerful voices and harmonies—the whole thing seems more honest and essential than *Sgt. Pepper's* in its raw clarity and ingenuity. (Capitol: 1966)

KILL YOUR RADIO: 4

Tim Kinsella of Joan of Arc reviews his 10 favorite damn records....



David Bowie "Hunky Dory"

Now I know why record reviews usually suck—these are my favorite records in the world and I simply have nothing to say about them. These records fulfill for me all the promises of transcendence and redemption that other peoples' religions promise. Anyway, I heard David Bowie on *Fresh Air* once and out of compassion for his discography I've been trying to forget [the interview] ever since. I mean he's David Bowie, and picking a favorite Bowie record is like picking my favorite finger. So I'll say

Hunky Dory is my final choice for this list [and my favorite Bowie album] 'cause that's the argument I've made many a drunken night (my friends and I are all too dumb to argue sports), so I'll stick with it. (RCA: 1971)



Bauhaus "The Sky's Gone Out"

I was blessed from an early age with not only white male privilege but loving middle-class parents that gave me \$5 once a week to mow the lawn. Since they did all they could in the best interest of their children, we lived in a suburb of Chicago that promised nothing interesting has or will ever happen there. But there was one place to walk to—the used record store specializing in punk rock—and I was ripe. For \$5 and the trade-in of whatever record I'd listened to 10,000 times that week the pot-head behind

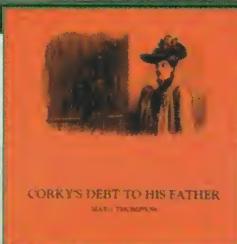
the counter would sell me a record. When I defiantly brought this home one afternoon against his advice I never brought it back and remain befuddled by it at least weekly, like the Catholic masses I stopped attending about the same time I got this record. (A&M: 1982)



Van Morrison "Astral Weeks"

The truth is I hate listening to this record because every time I do, I don't want to do anything but listen to it for the next month. I don't tend to my administrative duties, I lose interest in brushing my teeth, I drop a lit cigarette in my lap at least every other song. It's like there are songs being played, but where are they? And what species is making those sounds? It's like listening to a field recording of frogs in a swamp all the while completely convinced that with just one more listen you'll be able to pull the language out

of it, but it's always one listen away. (Warner Bros.: 1968)



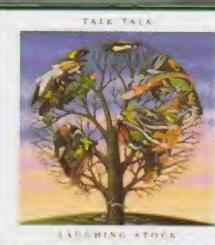
Mayo Thompson "Corky's Debt To His Father"

If a more human and charming inanimate object exists, I don't know of it. The patriarch of weirdoes decided in his late 20s or early 30s to make a blues record? A pop record? Love songs? A record of songs his dad might recognize as music? He's trying so hard and he's so sweet: "Like an old shoe you are the one. With your tongue hanging out and your laces undone." And his picture on the back in that suit looking like a 13 year-old dragged to a wake of a great-aunt he never met. I don't like or want to use the word "charming" but there's no other word for it. (Texas Revolution: 1969)



Lungfish "Pass And Stow"

Like anyone [who is now] 28 year-old, nothing mattered to me when I was in high school like Dischord. What a fucking streak they had in the early '90s. Every month a release—and sure you had your High Back Chairs—but what diversity and expressiveness those bands found in that small language. Lungfish is like the eastern Black Sabbath. They're like breathing underwater! Science and religion resolved! I'm one of the 100 people left that still buys all their records. But I'll say *Pass And Stow* only because that was the tour I saw them 5 times in a week—and even witnessed the Prophet of Doom himself, skating a half-pipe with his trench coat and fedora on, smiling ear to ear. Heavy as a black hole. (Dischord: 1994)



Talk Talk "Laughing Stock"

Everyone eats this shit up these days like all they ever really wanted was to see Gastr del Sol and Fugazi jam together. But truth be told, this record is in 3-D. It's the ultimate testament to dedication to making something and for the cost of it and a pair of headphones one will enjoy a lifetime of gurgling and scraping surprises. It's never the same record twice. And it's the Kingpin of mythology records. A year in a room with an oil lamp going in one direction and then reversing the direction to mix—I gotta hear that! And it's just so much sicker that these guys made it. (Polydor: 1991)



Big Star "#1 Record"

For five years I really and truly loved a young lady to absurd proportions. We were in a hotel room in Canada one morning after driving all night and we had just laid down and I started climbing on her and she wasn't having it. She said she was too tired and started flipping channels on the TV. As I resolved myself to rolling over and going to sleep she stopped and watched a young Matt Dillon. Within a minute she was suddenly interested and trying to get me to roll back over but I knew she just had a young Matt Dillon on her mind. This record makes me feel like I'm the young Matt Dillon—ain't no one going to turn me around. (Ardent: 1972)



Scott Walker "Scott 2"

When I was a sophomore in high school I interviewed Chris Connelly for a career speech in oral communications class. A whole week of kids summing up their conversations with their dentist or next door neighbor, the prosecuting attorney, and I talked about the Revolting Cocks and Ministry because I wanted to be the singer of a rock band when I grew up. When Chris's first solo record came out that year none of us knew what to make of the piano ballad the "The Amorous Humphrey Plugg." A couple years later my first chest hair sprouted and the dust was blown out of whatever corner of my mind my sense of masculinity had been in, once I found the records of the man that wrote that song. (Smash: 1968)



My Bloody Valentine "Loveless"

I take this record for granted. As far as I can tell it's sort of at the center of everyone born within a couple years of me. It's like pizza—everyone agrees on it and always has, so you never really appreciate how amazing it really is—just wake up every morning and it's still there and what's left to say about it? (It's like pizza? Brilliant!) But at least once a day I still think or talk to someone about the one time I saw them play 12 years ago and remained dazed from the volume for at least a week. And what about Kevin Shields? He still has to wake up and walk around every day. I've heard gossip about him waking people at 4 a.m. in search of a specific tube. How could any one young man contain all that? (Sire: 1991)



The Velvet Underground "self-titled"

This record is so good that it's as good as some records by Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Serge Gainsbourg, Television, Bruce Haack, Fugazi, Captain Beefheart, Led Zeppelin, Jorge Ben, Ennio Morricone, John Coltrane, Kicking Giant, Prince, Goblin, Lee Hazlewood, Robert Wyatt, Albert Ayler, Need New Body, Glenn Danzig, Talking Heads, Willie Nelson, Markus Popp, The Specials, The Smiths, Joy Division, Nation of Ulysses, De La Soul, Minor Threat, Jacques Brel, Can, Will Oldham, Brian Eno, John Cale, Nick Drake, Jackson C. Frank, Neil Young, Huggy Bear, Brigitte Bardot, Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd, Morton Feldman, Jandek, Unrest, Drive Like Jehu, Shuggie Otis, and the Soul Jazz reissues. Unbelievably, it's that good. (Polygram: 1967)

Video Game Reviews

The Getaway



Team Soho

The third word of dialogue in the game is "fuck." The F-bomb is dropped on a regular basis by every character for the rest of the game, and driving around London, it's nothing but "wanker" this and "tosser" that after you smash into innocent civilians. A take off on the Grand Theft genre (drive around, steal cars, run from the cops, steal another car once yours gets fucked up, shoot people, and complete the occasional mission), The Getaway tries to set itself apart by accurately depicting London and its underworld crime scene. The accents are cool, the city looks awesome, but the game is extraordinarily mediocre. The driving parts are generally fun, but it's the the action sequences where problems begin. You are able to waste a tremendous number of bad guys for no other reason than your superhuman ability to absorb numerous gunshot wounds, lean up against a wall, take some deep breaths, and watch the blood stains slowly fade away. The actual missions are generally just an annoying interlude between advances in the plot making the best part of this game the movies between missions, not exactly the highest praise.

The basic plot goes as follows: an attempt to kidnap former-criminal-turned-straight-man Mark Hammond's wife and child goes awry. His wife is killed and his kid thrown into a car and driven away, and before you know it, Mark has been sucked back into the life of crime he was trying so hard to get out of. Turns out that big time crime boss Charlie Johnson is behind the kidnapping and blackmails Mark into one suicide mission after another with the promise of getting his kid back.

The story line of this game (along with the digital re-creation of London) is supposed to be its selling point, sort of like a video game version of *Snatch* or *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, but after Mark finally gets his kid back and Charlie apparently gets whacked, the story goes back in time and you assume the role of rogue London police officer, DC Carter, who like Mark, is also going after the shady Charlie Johnson. Instead of being a cool plot twist, it's just an excuse to prolong this otherwise kinda boring game. After a few missions, I had to ask myself, "Why am I still playing this game?" and turn it off. **Genre:** Action

Mary Kate and Ashley's Sweet 16: License to Drive

Acclaim

It won't be long before these two take over the world. They were famous at an age before most people could walk, they were recently named the richest teenagers in the world, and the *Maxim*, *Stuff*, and *FHM* world are counting down the days until these two turn 18 and are legal to show up in their nipple-free soft-core pictures.

In this, their 11th video game title, we find Mary Kate and Ashley turning the tender sweet age of 16 and, that's right, getting "licensed to drive." Don't think for a second though, that this is just a driving game, over 30 "party-style" games are packed onto this disk, enough to make one video game reviewer rave, "A reasonably entertaining game if you can find a group of friends who come at it with the right mind set."

After passing your driver's test, you can pick up your "ride" to "cruise" for "hotties." Exciting mini-games like ATV quad racing, jet skiing, surfing, rock climbing, "Birthday Blowout," and my favorite, "Caught Up In Fashion," only add to the gaming experience. Players can play competitively or co-operatively and collect "party points" to unlock "cool tunes and clothes" and finally reach the pinnacle of any 16 year old girls life, gaining control of the car stereo.

The official company motto of the people who designed this game is "Real Games for Real Girls." In this context, I think I prefer "Real Games for Real Sick Dudes." **Genre:** Party



Rocky



Ubi Soft

Hands down the best game Law of Inertia has ever reviewed. A game that not only covers the entire Rocky opus, from scrawny *Rocky I* to roided out *Rocky V*, but does a damn fine job of it. You begin the game as a lowly fighter from the streets of Philadelphia and true to the movie, your first opponent is the pansy-ass "Spider Rico" who goes down like a glass-jawed chump. After Rocky fights his way through a few more bums, he reaches his first main event vs. Apollo Creed. After taking down Apollo, the competition slowly improves in the fights leading up to a rematch with Apollo, and after he goes down for a second time, Clubber Lang, Ivan Drago, and dudes like "Big Yank Ball" and "Mac Lee Green" await. The movie mode part of the game concludes with a last-man-standing, bare knuckled street fight with Rocky's former protégé Tommy Gunn.

Perhaps the greatest treat of the game are the mini movies before and after each major fight. The graphics are computer animated but the audio is lifted directly from the movie. If Drago's "I will break you" line wasn't funny enough, the exact same line delivered by a cartoonish computer animated Drago is fall on the floor funny.

The game also includes a knockout tournament where you can go toe to toe with up to 16 of your friends. Any true *Rocky* fan will appreciate a Clubber vs. Creed fight, or my favorite, Rocky vs. Mickey, his former trainer (before he croaked), assuming you've beaten the game on its most difficult setting and unlocked all the secret boxers (or just taken the codes off the internet).

The only things missing from this otherwise kick-ass game are "Eye of the Tiger" and a cameo appearance by Hulk Hogan. "Gonna Fly Now" is played ad nauseam, but when Rocky's getting his ass kicked in the 12th round and really needs some inspiration, it would fucking rock if you could enter some secret code, "Eye of the Tiger" started blasting, and you became invincible. And while all of Rocky's movie fights were ridiculous, none more so than his wrestling match for charity against Hogan. I'm sure it was just the damned licensing fees that kept Hogan out of the game. Still, it's the best boxing game since Mike Tyson's *Punch Out*. **Genre:** Sports

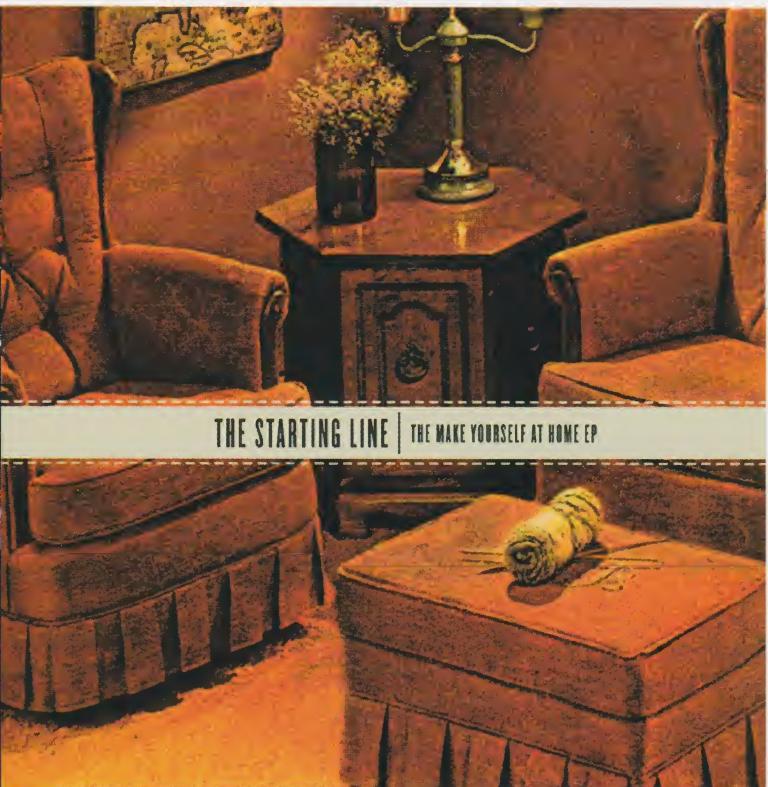


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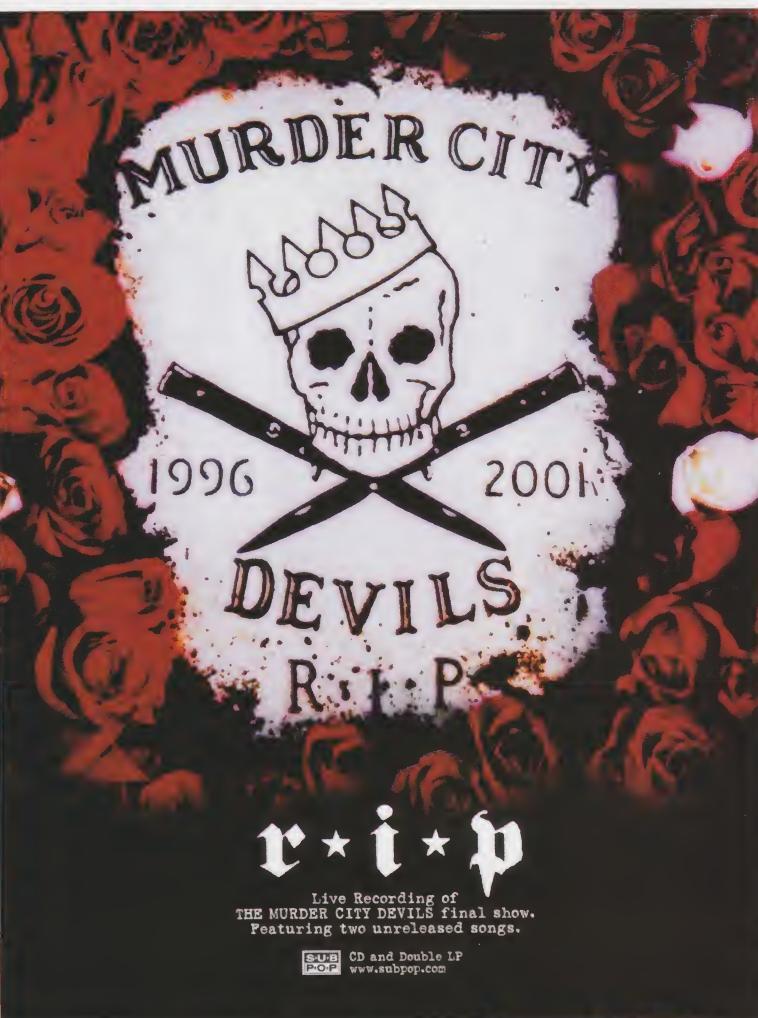


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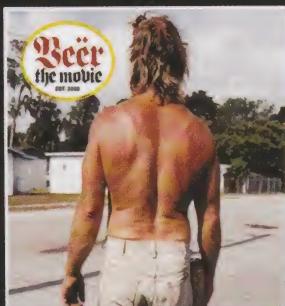
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Prince Dracula

URL: <http://www.prince-dracula.com>

The Goods: Although this site might be lacking design quality, its content goes well beyond Dracula's normal fright factor. Click the navigation link in the top left corner to reveal Prince Kretzulesco's newfound claim as sole heir to Dracula's kingdom. Twenty-two miles southeast of Berlin, Kretzulesco created his Principality of Dracula in 2002 to protest against Germany's legislation aiming to combine long-existing rural townships into larger administrative districts. The Principality aims to eradicate the myths created by Hollywood's depiction of Dracula, create a theme park to raise money for its cause, and get this, support blood drives around the world to encourage young, healthy people to donate for the global community. The Principality is currently recruiting new members by inviting the public to view Dracula's bedroom, the museum and adjacent gardens for 5 Euros, 3 Euros for children under 12. The museum offers discounts for senior citizens, students and type O-negatives without HIV or family history of diabetes. Adam Lindenbaum



Retromedia

URL: <http://www.Retroimedia.tv>

The Goods: I recently watched my 16-year old tape of *Alf* episodes and found myself fast-forwarding through the show just to watch the commercials. Unfortunately, our beloved Kool Aid or Honeycomb ads are long gone and never to return. Thanks to a few interntet archives these classic commercials are back from the dead. The best of the sites is Retromedia.tv. They specialize in ads from the '60's and '70's. Highlights includes a frighteningly trippy McDonalds spot from 1972 that would put *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* to shame. The beauty of these irony-free ads can be quite heartbreakin. Just knowing that I'll never again live in a world with 60-second ads from the National Bowling Council still chokes me up. Another great site is Bubblegoose.com. Here you'll find Alan Greenspan hawking Apple II Cs and that fat globule ABC rolled out on Saturday monrings. The *G.I. Joe*, *Transformers*, and *Star Wars* ads made me giddy. I now remember how safe I felt knowing that Fred "The Refrigerator" Perry was fighting Cobra forces and keeping America free. **Tim Holden**



Chicken Head

Chicken Head
URI: <http://www.chickenhead.com>

The Goods: This self-proclaimed pillar of intellectual bankruptcy is exactly where I think the positive cash flow position begins. You have to respect a site that makes fun of the Olsen Twins and teen movies, yet supports militant animal defense groups with equal gusto. You also have to respect any site that makes fair game of any group taking itself too seriously. Take hippies for example. At Chicken Head, you can see a reenacted autopsy on a stuffed doll of the hippie godfather himself. The autopsy not only recreates Jerry Garcia's organs with sausages and his brains with pork rinds (could be scallops), but actually analogizes his death-causing heart blockage to getting trapped behind the taping section during a crowd surge at a concert. Also, check out the "Academy Award Speech Generator" or "Teen Poetry Corner." Over-important celebrities and awkward teens' emotions are credited with equal sincerity—both are emotionally flat, flat-broke. **Adam Lindenbaum**



Find A Grave

Find A Grave

The Goods: Recently, the WWF's Miss Elizabeth passed away. I was so distraught and I had no way to express my grief. Thanks to Findagrave.com I was able to post a condolence message, place a digital bouquet of flowers, and find the plot where Mr. Savage's best gal is interred. Many other fans did the same, but her most touching tribute had to be from Joel Manuel, "You once winked at me at a WCW event in Baton Rouge. What happened?" He decided to forgo the traditional flowers and instead left a digital kitty. This site lists thousands of famous and not so famous corpses. Kurt Cobain's 801 mourners left everything from digital butterflies, to a pack of smokes, to a can of beer. Gen. Robert E. Lee: A dizzying array of Confederate flags. Jim Morrison's was typical: peace signs and candles. As was Karl Marx's: A dinosaur with its tongue sticking out. Note, the creators of Findagrave do have a conscience. If a person is considered too infamous or just downright vile then you can't leave a digital tribute. This made for very sparse pages for Adolf Hitler, Lee Harvey Oswald, and Karen Carpenter. **Tim Holden**



Kiss This Gun

URI: <http://www.kissthisguy.com>

URL: <http://www.kieshispiguy.com>
The Goods: *Law of Inertia* is severely unqualified to evaluate porn. That being said, forage past your normal mental connections to homosexual webpages toward how you thought you heard Jimi Hendrix's 1967 single, "Purple Haze." Now you remember... you were finishing off a six-pack of Schaeffer tallboys, sitting in your parents' basement, about to make a move on the girl... and it fucking hit you like a brick to the nuts. In the lead track to *Are You Experienced*, Jimi clearly sings, "Scuse me, while I kiss this guy." Most of us misheard this one at one point or another, regardless of the drug of choice, or did we? The front page offers some doubt as to what the true lyrics are, but in case you don't care, this site is a message board of misunderstood song lyrics. Search by song or artist for your favorites. How about Eddie Money's "Two Tickets To Paradise" mistaken for "Two Chickens To Paralyze" or "Tic Tac's And A Pair Of Dice"? Ever mishear The Ramones "I Want To Be Sedated" as "I Want A Piece Of Danish"? [Adam Lindenthal](#)



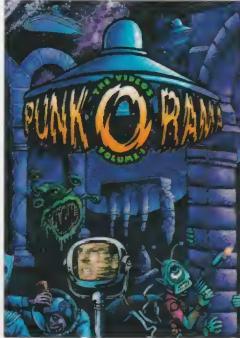
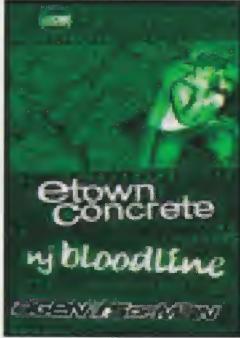
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Chick Publications

URL: <http://>

The Goods: Before I went on Chick.com, I never knew how easy it was to burn in hell. All I had to do was read one of the dozens of Fundamentalist Christian comic books in Chick.com's archives to be convinced that I too was a sinner and deserved nothing but eternal damnation. For two decades Jack Chick has been writing tiny black and white comic books with drawings similar to Roy Lichtenstein's and Marvel's Jack Kirby. While the books look as innocent as an *Archie* comic, the 40-panel strip almost always involves a character that is either damned, smitten, condemned, or simply hosed by God for not being born again and accepting Jesus as his right hand man. Every comic book Mr. Chick ever printed is now available on the website. There's even an online store where you can buy such titles as "The Passover Plot," "This Was Your Life," and "The Gay Blade" for only 14 cents each. Or for only \$700 you can receive 10,000 copies of any one of these "easy-to-understand soul winning gospel tracts." **Tim Holden**

video REVIEWS



OTR Records Presents E Town Concrete, NJ Bloodline, and Agents of Man (On The Rise) DVD- Did you ever wonder what it's like to be in a practice room with a hardcore band in New Jersey? Did you ever wish that you could hang out in the parking lot of a convenience store with a hardcore band, in New Jersey? Have you ever laid in your bed dreaming that some day you might someday go to a show and see a hardcore band... in New Jersey? Are you from New Jersey? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you should run out and buy this DVD. On this disc, On The Rise brings together three of the Garden State's hardest working bands: NJ Bloodline, Agents of Man, and those lovably overconfident boys in E Town Concrete. There's some live footage combined with some interviews and a lot of talk about how hard it is to be in a band and how important the fans are. If you're not a huge fan of these bands I would recommend taking the money you would spend on it and going to support your own local hardcore scene. And if you live in a place without a scene then you should be out there starting one. If New Jersey can have a scene, then anywhere must be able to. **Stan Horaczek**

As Friends Rust/Strike Anywhere Live At Camden Underworld (Punkervision) DVD- I have got to admit that before I even sat down to watch this, I was a little suspicious. I couldn't help but wonder why two bands from the states would choose to release a DVD of a show in Europe. I know that some bands like to do the whole "look at us because we play shows in Europe" thing to gain credibility in the eyes of fans and detractors alike, but I like both of these bands too much to expect that from them. After I took a look at it though I realized that they did it, not to gain status, but rather because it

was a really kick ass show. I've come to expect live DVDs to suck due to their normally low audio and video quality as well as their boring, static camera angles, but this DVD doesn't suffer from any of that. Everything looks and sounds good, the editing looks professional, and both bands put on extremely energetic live shows. This DVD has come very close to recreating the amazing feeling of actually being at a show, something not easily done. There is a lack of bonus footage, but I'd rather see none than suffer through twenty minutes of the bands talking about what they were wearing that day or whatever other kinds of useless nonsense is usually considered to be bonus. No bullshit, this one rocks. **Stan Horaczek**

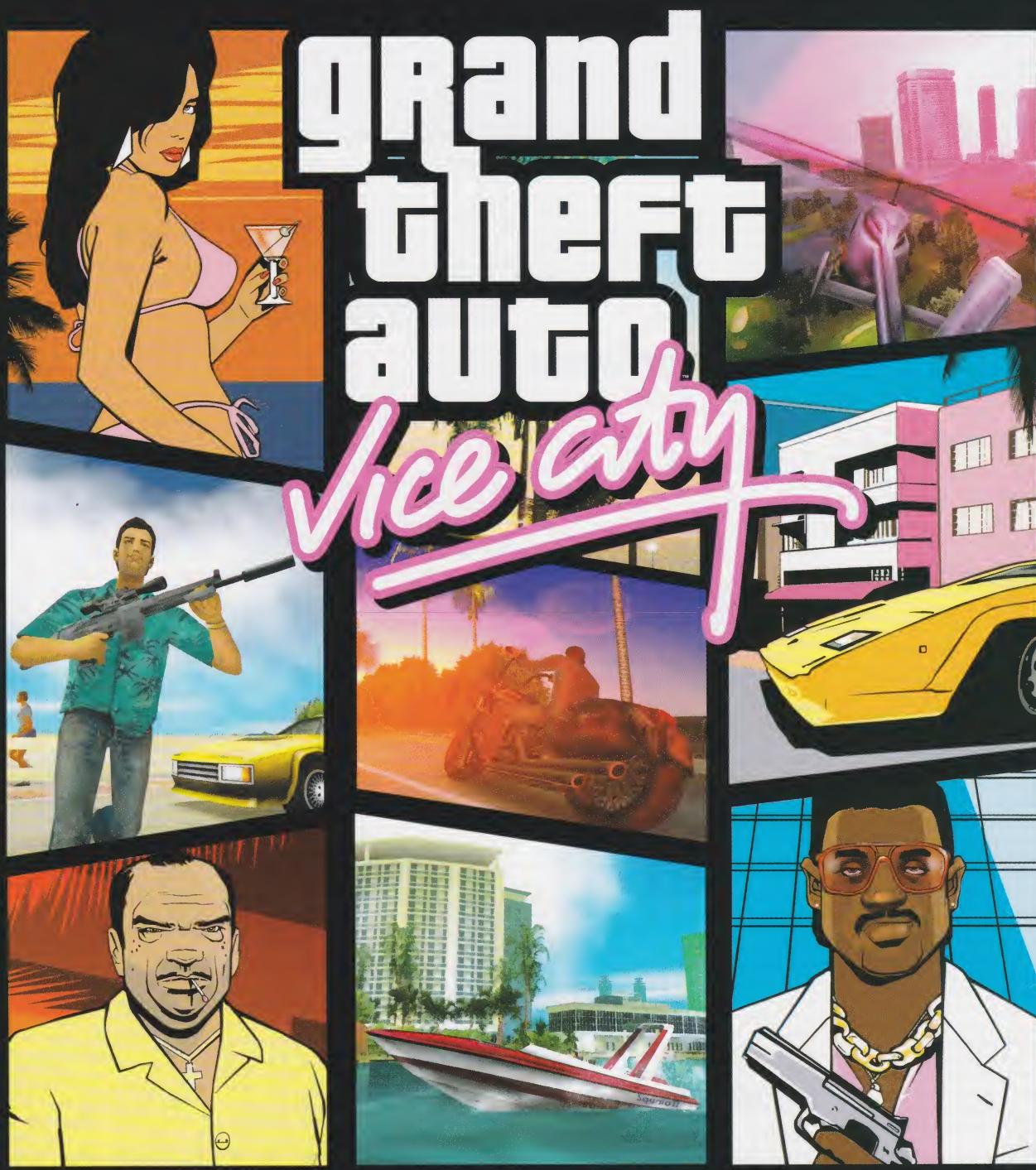
Discordance Axis Grindcore Ninja Commando Team DVD (Hydrahead)- How many people know about Discordance Axis? How many people really care? Enough to warrant a DVD? Regardless, I have one here in my hands, and I am going to give you my opinion on it. As the title implies, DA plays abrasive grindcore— which I have to say is not best style of music when served up live— at least not for an introduction to such a group. Nonetheless, Discordance Axis first thrashed their way into my skull with a live performance in Japan via this handy DVD. I wouldn't say grindcore altogether appeals to me, so even though DA proficiently blazes through their set with the utmost ease— thrash-master and skin-pounder Dave Witte in particular— I am not especially moved or wholly affected by the onslaught. The Japanese audience was tickled pink, and welcomingly blown away. Were I familiar with Discordance Axis' music prior to my viewing of this DVD, I may have gotten more from it than I did. Circumstances as they are, I would not recommend this DVD to anyone who is not

an avid Discordance Axis fan or thrash enthusiast. Still, those that are will feast bloodily well. In addition to the live in Japan segments, this awkward-to-navigate DVD also features a video of squiggly lines, a discography, and a detailed history of Discordance Axis that was fun to read. Boy, these guys sure had some hard times. Rest in peace, fellas. **Joe Vespa**

CBGB: Punk From The Bowery DVD- Usually, when I pop in a video cassette or DVD containing live footage of punk rock bands I am not expecting the pinnacle of cinematic expertise when it comes to camera direction and sound quality. However, I must say that this particular DVD does a superior job in conveying the unbridled energy that is a punk rock show at CBGB's. If you can go to your bathroom and grab a hair dryer and blast it in your face while sitting in between four of your best guy friends after a rousing four hour game of basketball in 110 degree heat, then you will be close to getting the whole CBGB experience. Highlights of this DVD include Agnostic Front busting out a few classics, Madball demonstrating their style with "True To The Game," H2O proving they are still "Faster Than The World" and John Joseph of the Cro-Mags booting an unruly fan off the stage with a sharp side kick to the head. The performances herein, culled from shows that took place over the past two years, are all proof that good punk rock is still alive, moving into this, punk's fourth decade. Personally, I think it would have been more effective to have used footage from the bands playing the club in their prime (i.e. AF in '82), but hey, that's just me. Club owner Hilly Kristal also provides some in-depth commentary and anecdotes from the club's long history that range from Jimmy Gestapo to Sid Vicious. **Frankie Corva**

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Turbonegro

"Scandinavian Leather"

(Epitaph)

For those newly converted as well as those who've been down since the start, the day of reckoning has arrived—Turbonegro has released their first new material since the album that both single handedly revitalized and hammered the final nail into the coffin of rock and roll. *Apocalypse Dudes*. Yes, *Scandinavian Leather* is upon us and they've somehow managed to take the home-phile schtick to the next level. Opening with porno music that would make even Ron Jeremy blush, the album segues into a riff stolen from the heyday of Kiss before kicking into the blatant Stooges rip-off "Sell Your Body To The Night." Yeah these guys know they're living legends, they know they rock hard, they know they're stealing riffs and yet they beg the question, "What are you going to do about it?" Other certified instant classics include: "Train of Flesh", "Wipe It Till It Bleeds" and the eloquently hostile über-ballad, "Fuck The World." This album seems a little out of place within the Turbonegro catalog. It's not nearly as polished as the *Dudes* yet not nearly as raw as *Ass Cobra*. More like the album that logically should have come between the two. While this album is no *Apocalypse Dudes*, one of the finest rock records ever made, with a few repeated listens I found myself singing along to every chorus and begging for more of the freight train of flesh that is Turbonegro. I can't wait until they press this one to wax so I can get me twelve more sizzling hot black inches of Turbo-insanity. **Aaron Lefkove**



A18

Forever After Nothing (Victory)

Surprisingly good mid-tempo modernish metal-core (don't you hate it when there's a real lack of a better term?). The vocals aren't strangulated and thankfully aren't trying for a rap influence either. A solid raspy vocal does wonders for a dense metallic approach like this. It's not so overpowering that it manages to complement the sound, something that a lot of bands seem to be getting wrong these days. There's a real satisfying lurching sound in this, sort of in an old Chicago style, which switches nicely to faster parts. Good, straight ahead material with hard, murderously delivered vocals. It's just too bad that the packaging has strange over-the-top images of people offering themselves and an overall lack of a draw to the consumer who has never heard of these guys. **dup**

The Adventures Of Jet

Muscle (Suburban Home)

I'm usually interested in checking out bands on Suburban Home even though I never quite like what they release. Suburban Home, true to their namesake, is practically synonymous with honest-to-goodness, homemade pop music in a do-it-yourself way that made labels like Lookout world famous and The Adventures Of Jet are no exception. Other than the fact that playing at big name industry showcases like South By Southwest or The International Pop Overthrow never impressed me in the least (those festivals are just excuses for record executives to beat off all over one another's expense accounts), The Adventures Of Jet are hard to write off immediately. Sure they're biting The Cars and Weezer a bit more than they should. But the guitars are crisp, not a note or beat is out of place on this finely manicured record, and the singer— who sounds like he was ripped straight out of 1996 geek-rockers, Servotron—is a bit too loveable for his own good. Oh yeah, there's moog featured all over this disc, I know a lot of you geek rockers like to beat off to any band with a moog (so fire up the expense accounts industry execs). This is not really my thing, but I could see how fans of any of the aforementioned bands would like this a lot. **Ross Siegel**

AFI

Sing The Sorrow (Dreamworks)

Perhaps AFI have underestimated their rabid fanbase's loyalty. Or, maybe they know exactly what they're doing. In their major label debut, AFI have made a dramatic, grandiose, opera of an album that beautifully transcends the borders of punk, hardcore, metal, goth, industrial, and plain old radio-friendly pop music. The songs soar, the dynamics are potent, the mood is fierce—this record is a formidable accomplishment for a band that has done it all. However, AFI may be going a bit above and beyond with their attentiveness to their listeners. Accompanying this record is a mail-away form which instructs Johnny

Middle-America to send \$29.99 to an address in California so he too can be part of AFI's super secret, super elite Despair Faction. That's right, send in your parents' hard earned cash and you too can have a membership card proving your loyalty to Oakland's best band. Oh yeah, your membership also gets you some free internet content. In summary: I love the music, but AFI can keep their silly club. **Ross Siegel**

Agoraphobic Nosebleed

Altered States Of America (Relapse)

While listening to *Altered States Of America* in the company of my girlfriend, I realized just how completely tacky these guys, their music, and the layout and art in their CD truly is. Don't get me wrong, I like it, but in every regard, it is free of any and all taste and discretion. With a drum machine as the band's backbone, Agoraphobic Nosebleed brutally shreds through 99 tracks of harsh and extreme thrashcore, grind, and metal that satisfies every craving for musical violence any serial killer has ever had. If extreme music floats the carcass of your last victim, and you still giggle at the utterance of the word "pussy," Agoraphobic Nosebleed and their *Altered States Of America* is unquestionably the perfect soundtrack to your drug usage, fart jokes, and overall jackassery. Chances are you don't have a girlfriend. By the off chance you do, be sure to keep this disc well hidden deep in your underwear drawer. **Joe Vespa**

The Aislers Set

How I Learned To Write Backwards (Suicide Squeeze)

Okay, I like The Shaggs too. We all do. Yes, we're all down with outsider-music. We love Jandek and those cute Langley girls too. But do we really need to hear a bunch of kids, who are no doubt clad in faux-hawks, with white-leather belts above their skinny ties, sing just like The Shaggs while playing music that ranges from older Replacements to *a capella* to downright creepy? This has its moments but it's mostly just plain weird. **Ross Siegel**

All Night

(Tee Pee)

Tee Pee Records comes through once again with another hard workin' southern rock blowout extravaganza. This time it's Chapel Hill's All Night, undoubtedly the hardest working rock band below the Mason-Dixon line. These guys don't just talk the talk, they walk the fucking walk my friend. Just take a look at their rough and toothless bass player... he's fucking toothless! Alright, in all seriousness this Chapel Hill Jack Daniels-swilling rock band has everything you need for a night of hard drinkin' with the boys and none of what you don't. They've got not one, but two wailing guitarists, grooves that ride deeper than a cheap stripper's thong, a singer who may in fact be the long lost fourth Van Zant brother, and more rhythm and soul than an inner city high school marching band competition. And to top it off they're

not afraid to let it all out in epic bursts of wanky rock aggression that last upwards of six minutes a piece. For those who've seen *Freebird: The Movie*, appreciate the work of the Charlie Daniels Band or attended one of the many Molly Hatchet reunions, this one's for you. South's gonna do it again! **Aaron Lefkove**

American Analog Set

Promise of Love (Tiger Style)

This Austin indie-rock staple plays simple, yet stunningly pretty music. In a typical AAS song the melodies are not complex or mind boggling in any way. Rather, once Andrew Kenney, the tunesmith behind AAS' sheen, stumbles upon a good base for a song, he fails to deviate from that framework through the course of each 4-minute lullaby. This is sort of the same thing Tom Petty or Cat Power do, but with very different results. This record does not blow the doors off convention or expectations of what soft pop-music should sound like, but it's a solid release nonetheless. **Ross Siegel**

Arab On Radar

The Stolen Singles (3 One G)

Once when I was 15 years old some friends and I cut open a tube on an air-conditioning unit and filled a garbage bag with Freon. We sat there huffing the shit all night. At one point I felt like my teeth were falling out of my head. At another point I stumbled over to a friend of mine and just punched him in the face for no apparent reason. Listening to *Arab On Radar* is as close to that sensation as I've ever managed to get without the aid of industrial chemicals. This is a compilation of tracks culled from various 7 inch EPs and splits that the band has done over the past few years. If you long for that youthful inebriated sensation that I just described then pick this up. **Aaron Lefkove**

The Ataris

So Long Astoria (Capitol)

I just thought of an *Onion* article. The headline reads, "Girlfriend Sees Boyfriend's Favorite Movie And Still Can't Get Reference." It would have one of those classic pictures of him embracing her with a forced smile and he would be wearing a limited edition *PCU* or *Animal House* shirt or something. The pull-quote would read, "I can't see why he would like a movie where the protagonist's only goal is to attain free beer. It's just childish." Clearly my attention is not being paid to the Ataris, but I just can't focus my attention on this record. It's boring. Anything even remotely interesting either never occurred to them or their producer vetoed. The chorus to A-Ha's "Take On Me" goes perfectly to the music of "Unopened Letter," and someone should really help these guys with their song structures. Rock has just seen, or rather heard, too much three-chord pop-punk and I'm personally declaring war on all of it. If you're younger and new to this, may I suggest the Descendents or Big Drill Car. Why? The bands of today are ripping

off the bands of yesterday, quite simply. The problem is, much of today just can't hold a candle to the past. **Jeremy Curtin**

Blood Brothers

Burn, Piano Island, Burn (Artist Direct)

A friend of mine who's a sucker for blues, jazz, and hardcore punk told me his favorite band is the Blood Brothers. At first, I was understandably confused, but after listening to *Burn, Piano Island, Burn*, I grasped the connection. From the first track, the bassist adopts a Les Claypool-bluesman bass slapping style. Their jazz-based breakdowns that launch into larynx-straining vocals remind me of Candiria's obsession with jazz fusion. Every track offers something unique to the listener— whether it's a southern guitar twang, a classic Wurlitzer piano, or a hardcore scream, they cleanly combine them in one track. Lyrically, the album centers on topics like sex, disease, and violence, and, while just as dark as those on their previous album *This Adultery is Ripe*, they're not guaranteed to make sense, and instead feel disconnected and random. Take some of the lyrics to "Cecilia and the Silhouette Saloon," for example, "Murder = White Out. Cancer = Birth Blouse. Mirror = Perfect Glass Spouse. Oil = Sex Paint." They may sound great when backed by a heavy bass, but they play second fiddle to the instrumentals. **Rebecca Swanner**

Blueline Medic

Text_Bomb (Fueled By Ramen)

The comfortable, mid-tempo pop-punk based jams of Australia's Blueline Medic return to the Yankee shores in sophomore full-length form this year, once again courtesy of Florida's premiere independent label Fueled By Ramen. For those who found the band's previous EP a spectacular listen (as did yours truly), this full-length pretty much serves as an extension to what you've already known and become accustomed to. However, to those not already in the know, prepare to receive one of the finest educations in meticulous songwriting and composition from this quartet from down under. Blueline Medic's overall sound is an amalgamation of sources. There's Europe's Funeral Oration and Leatherface, a hair of the Smiths, maybe even a dash of (dare I say) Guided By Voices, all converging at a rather unique point in the soundscape. It's not as directed and succinct as most bands in their genre, but the interplay between arpeggiated guitars, dynamic drumming and flowing vocal melodies is outstanding and worth every minute of a listen. **Waleed Rashidi**

Books Lie

Weep (Coalition)

Here's a rarity. A hardcore band from Brooklyn, NY that doesn't have that distinct tough-guy New York Hardcore flair nor bears that pesky and all too common "Brooklyn Band" tag that's become almost standard in today's slew of up and coming youngsters. It's refreshing when a band

Nada Surf

"Let Go"

(Barsuk Records)

Someone please raise a glass of wine to Nada Surf. It's been seven years since 1996's sensitive boy anthem "Popular" made the NYC rock trio an MTV staple. It's also been five years since Elektra dropped them for refusing to modify their artistic sophomore offering *The Proximity Effect*. Blessedly DIY, Nada Surf indulges fans and critics a piece of perfect pop-haze urban beauty by way of their new album *Let Go*. The title—so simple, so true—says it all. Recorded in blonde L.A., but written mostly with blonde New York in mind, these twelve slow to mid-tempo songs of Big Star-esque heartbreak, night-lit thought binges and rueful maturity drift and soar to absolutely heart-wrenching heights. And singer/guitarist Matthew Caws' sweet tenor carries a sense of painful nostalgia within each and every melody. "Blizzard of '77" with its catchy acoustic lead-in spills onto "Happy Kid's" electric confession: "I'm just a happy kid/ Stuck with the heart of a sad punk/ Drowning in my id." Both "Blonde On Blonde" and "Paper Boats" twist these same themes—city-mind confusion, subways, people, depression, love—into indie lullabies so memorable that they play in your mind like flickering miniature movies. "Been thinking and drinking all over town/ Must be gearing up for some kind of meltdown," Caws softly insists. If *Let Go* is Nada Surf's ultimate meltdown and most candid release, then we as listeners should feel lucky to experience it, because music, unlike therapy, doesn't pause when the session ends. **Solvej Schou**



can be overtly political and socially aware in their message yet still retain enough of a sense of humor to not turn away listeners by being too in your face and preachy. Musically these guys play a very '80's Washington DC inspired style of hardcore that calls to mind fellow political proponents as diverse as Born Against, Universal Order of Armageddon and The Faith as well as a good portion of the Verminform and Dischord rosters. These guys and girl don't just limit themselves strictly to hardcore though as several of the tracks delve into the experimental electronic realm of things and even straddle the line of instrumental hip hop. Possibly the only album reviewed in this issue that will appeal to fans of both Orchid and Company Flow. **Aaron Lefkove**

Boy Sets Fire

Tomorrow Come Today

(Wind-up)

Apple Zings, Honey Buzzers, and Golden Puffs. They may save you money, but you're probably not buying these generic cereals for taste. And while I could listen to pseudo-hardcore on the radio, I'd rather listen to something with bite. That's why I worried about the future of Boy Sets Fire when they signed to Wind-Up, the same label that is home to that great band no one likes, Creed. I had already watched the demise of H2O and V.O.D. after they signed to major labels and I feared the same fate for BSF. *Tomorrow Come Today* is their first full-length release on Wind-Up and I'm not impressed. Instead of keeping their trademark division between gritty hardcore and melodic emo-esque tracks, they've blended the two together, creating a sound that fails to make any impact. With the exceptions of "Release the Dogs," originally from the EP *Live For Today*, and "On In Five" both of which remind me of *After the Eulogy's* "Rookie," this album has the power of a rickety old man trying to tear a steak with his teeth. What really threw me off though was the untitled hidden track attached to "On In Five." It's a slow, melancholy, apolitical love song that reminds me more of "Mass Pike" by the Get Up Kids than quality melodic hardcore. I probably would have liked the song if it hadn't been by BSF, but I don't want Toasty O's— I want my Cheerios. **Rebecca Swanner**

Breaking Pangaea

Phoenix EP

(Equal Vision)

For starters, Breaking Pangaea sound a lot larger than they actually are, both live and on record. The trio has successfully avoided the thin, empty impressions through picked-out chords, driving drums, and vocals that effectively fill the gaps in open spaces throughout the band's material. *Phoenix* is filled with competent musicianship. Scope out that awesome fretboard run during the solo of the title track for instance, laid over chord progressions with a decidedly eastern influence. There's plenty of head-nodding pop to be offered throughout the five tracks of *Phoenix* and that is Breaking Pangaea's saving grace. Where most bands of this genre, be it post-punk, math rock, or whatever the hell you call it, opt for

the technical, the intricate, the oft-confusing key change and time signature cock-wank in lieu of simple musicality and palatability, Breaking Pangaea resort to their uncluttered, common-denominator pop sensibilities and ought to be commended. Though they've yet to reach the divine power trio status of, say, Burning Airlines or Sugar, with a little more coaxing, shaping, molding and direction, Breaking Pangaea could be worthy contenders. And that, folks, wouldn't be a bad place to be. **Waleed Rashidi**

The Briefs

Off The Charts

(Dirtnap)

Reclaiming pop-punk from the new lows it's achieved at the merciless hands of the entire Drive-Thru roster in recent years, Seattle's The Briefs return with a dozen or so 2-minute jams that harken back to the days before Milo ever went off to college or even took the SATs for that matter. The album clocks in at under a half hour, and every song is hook upon hook to the point where...hell, even the hooks have hooks! Highlights include the anti-hipster attack "Who Made You So Smart?" and "[Looking Through] Gary Glitter's Eyes" a clever take on the Adverts '77 classic "Gary Gilmore's Eyes." Word on the street is that these guys just inked a major label deal and with their infectious pop sensibility it may not be too long before we see their DEVO meets Descendents mugs plastered all over the place. **Aaron Lefkove**

Buzzcocks

(Merge)

Buzzcocks on Merge? I guess anything can happen these days— well, I guess it's still unlikely that the Buzzcocks, the eternal masters of catchy punk singles, will ever put out bad material. Unlike some of my *Law of Inertia* posse, I loved their last album on Go Kart and this record is just as good. The sound is markedly different than their last, with a raw, harder guitar sound and less of the polish of the last album. But the ringing Diggle/Shelley vocals come out over the top of this punchy mix to deliver the classic Buzzcocks-style end product. Still powerful and endearing, this is another chapter to add to the amazing catalog of this amazing band. They ought to gain some new fans due to texture that they have on this record— it's time to go see the grandfathers of pop-punk live. They might just have a nice firm asskicking waiting for you. I was looking forward to this record, but I wasn't expecting it to be this good. **dup**

Califone

Quicksand/Cradlesnakes
(Thrill Jockey)

When was the last time you discovered a record so classically, old-fashioned romantic— like a box of chocolates and red roses— that it nearly broke your heart? That is what this Califone disc is to me. It's in the way these songs are constructed, within their tonal peaks and valleys, that makes me feel guilty that I haven't fallen in love recently. "Horoscopic Amputation Hon ey" is a seven-minute dirge that serves as

a true representation of Chicago's Califone and their tear-jerking sound. If you're still standing by the end of it, you can take it as a good sign that you have not given up on love. The band's choice of various instruments, such as cello, triangles, whispers, steel drums, and mandolins not only set the band apart from their contemporaries in the indie world, but also serve to envelop the listener with fresh and engaging sounds. Vocalist Tim Rutili's droning voice is so hypnotic, you can not fight the urge to be lulled into a tranquil semi-conscious haze. *Quicksand/Cradlesnakes* is a success to the musical art form in that it owns the ability to make you feel. **Celeste Tabora**

Cursed

One

(Deathwish Inc.)

I'm glad to see that there are still bands out there that can be metalcore without neglecting the "core" part of the genre. It seems as though I spend most of my time these days trying to find bands that I don't need a calculator to understand. Simplicity without stupidity is getting tougher to find these days. Cursed pieces together some solid and particularly brutal music that isn't mind blowingly original, but still rocks hard as hell. The mix of blood-soaked lyrics and mostly straight-ahead drum licks mesh nicely with the growling vocals and melodies that remind me vaguely of Give Up The Ghost (formerly American Nightmare). My only real complaint here is that the distortion gets to be almost overbearing and I think that it might be covering up some really brutal riffs. If you listen to it loud enough though, you won't notice the difference. Besides being very solid musically, the layout on this release is some of the nicest that I've seen, so even though this CD will probably sit on my shelf most of the time, at least it'll look good doing so. **Stan Horaczek**

Darkest Hour

Hidden Hands Of A Sadist Nation

(Victory)

One of two things has happened. Either I have become the authority on the metalcore genre, or bands have started putting out records that are more and more predictable as they go along. I would like to think that the first was true but seeing as I don't even have black hair I'm leaning toward the latter. It's been a long time since I've said the words "here comes the breakdown" and not been totally on point. There seems to be an overwhelming amount of this kind of thrash metal coming out lately with this release and the latest Bleeding Through release leading the pack.

For right now it's a good sound to have but I fear that it won't take long for people to tire of the pseudo-blast beat tempos, double bass gallops, over produced mixes, and glottal growling vocals that have been done just a little too much. I will admit that I like this album, but the new generation of metal bands like Between The Buried And Me are going in a different and more interesting direction. This is a Darkest Hour disc for Darkest Hour fans. Even if you're not a fan, you have to give them credit for doing what

they want and not throwing any emo parts into their songs. No identity issues here just straight brutality. **Stan Horaczek**

Death By Stereo

Into The Valley Of Death

(Epitaph)

I've always wondered what you would get if you mixed an '80's metal hair band with a SoCal punk band and a new school hardcore band and the answer has finally come to me in the form of this album. This is kind of what System Of A Down would sound like if they were a punk band. The vocals vacillate between soaring lyrics and metalcore screaming with tons of melodic and powerful back up vocals to keep you on your toes. As anyone already familiar with DBS would expect, the musicianship here is all really tight and clean. The songs have gotten a little more straight ahead than previous DBS records, but they don't lose their technical feel or interesting sound. The highlight of the CD for me is in "Let Down and Alone" when they go from a very danceable breakdown into what sounds like a sing along at a monastery. This isn't going to make me go out and get the "Death For Life" tattoo that hardcore DBS fans have, but it definitely is worth a listen and should prove to make a great live show. Pick this one up. For some reason this record makes me feel like going out to get a burrito, I wonder why. **Stan Horaczek**

Dressy Bessy

Little Music
(Kindercore)

Can you say '60's retro? No, come on it's not hard. Sixties-retro. Combine that with new-age technology (i.e. a couple of blips and beeps) and you've got the foundation for Dressy Bessy's sound. With touches of Veruca Salt, Liz Phair, and Bratmobile you know you're going to have something to complement your sugar-bomb addled giddiness. On a casual listen this collection of singles and rare tracks seems like it could be the background jingle for one of the first car ads because of its sweet-sounding melodies. And what is that, a kazoo? Probably not, but this not-as-bubblegum-as-you-think-although-it-makes-you-feel-all-fuzzy-inside band waltzes through cheery melodies with a sly sensibility that makes those miserable spring days just bearable. **Rebecca Swanner**

Endless Struggle

Till The End
(A-F Records)

Okey. Endless Struggle are just that. They are an endless struggle to keep the beer guzzling, mohawk sportin', leather and studs, tattoo clad punk rocker in all of us alive. I commend them on this. However, I think this record could be a lot better. The energy is definitely there, but the end result is more hollow and poorly-mixed than is probably beneficial. Even if I'm grooving along to a song I need to make some serious adjustments to my stereo to even out the bass and vocals. The music is your typical street punk, rife with plenty of gang vocals and dance parts. If you have

Black Eyes

Self-titled

(Dischord)

I first came across Black Eyes through a friend whose taste in music does not often overlap with mine. She told me she saw a band called Black Eyes who "were fucking amazing." I nodded and ignored her. I was still reeling from the unfortunate listening experience I had a few months prior with Black Dice's most recent disaster. I got Black Eye's Ian Mackaye-produced debut on Dischord and popped it in the stereo not expecting a whole lot. Upon first listen, Black Eyes are nothing more than a Washington DC band approximating Brooklyn, NY bands like Oneida, The Liars, The Yeah Yeah Yeahs, and Enon. But, after further inspection, Black Eyes sound nothing like their Brooklyn counterparts and draw more from Washington DC based Go-Go music than anything on DFA Records. Black Eyes blend feedback-laden grooves with frenetic drumming (there are multiple drum tracks per song), wonderful dub-influenced bass-lines, and vocals that sound like Gang of Four meets Oneida. This isn't for everyone, but personally I am sold. If you like the more avant garde stuff coming out of DC (Slant 6, Smart Went Crazy, Q and not U) then you will dig this too. I may trust my friend a bit more from now on. **Ross Siegel**



a mohawk, er... one that's made with glue, not with your trendy need to be cool, you'll most likely love this. If you have the other kind of mohawk, like the kind I see in all the Brooklyn, NY hot spots these days, shave it, you look like an idiot. I support this effort. It's good to see the kids are still out of line. **Jeremy Curtin**

Ester Drang

Infinite Keys (Jade Tree)

I have a 5 disc CD changer which has obvious advantages: I don't have to get up to change the CD when my girlfriend ties me to the bed, I can put off the task of picking out music to listen to for at least a few days, you get the picture. The problem is that I often forget what it is that I'm listening to. My brain has only so much room, and remembering that disc #4 is Rye Coalition while #5 is The Panthers can get quite confusing (especially when you consider that The Panthers and Rye Coalition sound very much alike). So, when disc #2 rolled around with the debut from Oklahoma's Ester Drang I wondered to myself, "How did my Radiohead CD get in the stereo?" followed quickly by, "Wait a second, I don't have any Radiohead CDs," which was of course followed up with "I need to get a Radiohead CD because they are much better than Ester Drang." **Ross Siegel**

Exploding Hearts

Guitar Romantic (Dirtnap)

Hot on the heels of the success of retro-new-wave-punks The Briefs, Dirtnap comes at it again with these guys. While The Briefs pick up somewhere between The Weirdos and Descendents, Portland's Exploding Hearts have their eyes set on the more power-pop side of the spectrum- namely bands like the Undertones, The Boys, and the Starjets. If you're a fan of those aforementioned then you'll fucking eat the Hearts up! Songs like "Rumors In Town," "Modern Kicks," and the mandatory glue-sniffing anthem, "Jailbird," reignite a torch that has long been absent in punk rock. This is *real* pop-punk kiddies- not Good Charlotte! Would your dear pal Aaron ever steer you wrong? I think not. Buy this. **Aaron Lefkove**

Fall Out Boy

...Evening With Your Girlfriend (Uprising)

This is pretty mediocre emo/pop-punk. From the opening song's overdone lament to some poor girl about being "your John Cusack," to the tongue-in-cheek shiny new scrapbook look of the liner notes, I had the feeling that I had seen and heard this kind of stuff before. The relentless pogo stick bounciness of the songs is probably infectious if you're 16, just got your driver's license, and are out for a spin in mom's mini-van, but as the singer's whine went flat again and again, it stopped being fun for me by track 3. The name-dropping (e.g. Parker Lewis, The Descendents, and *Rushmore*) gets tired too. Look for Fall Out Boy on the soundtrack to the next American Pie

sequel. **Nicholas Powers**

F-minus

Wake Up Screaming (Hellcat)

Taking a page straight from Minor Threat's book, F-Minus embraces hostile vocals with circle pit energy. Ian's trademark voice has been replaced with that of brazen guitarist Erica Dakin's and the almost as powerful one of guitarist Brad Logan. Produced by Steve Albini, of Shellac, who has engineered albums for more bands than some of us would have time to listen to and whose styles are as musically diverse as PJ Harvey, Helmet and Bush, this album is technically dead on. I hate the cover artwork- probably because I'm a big wimp and 1-800 collect commercials scare me, but I love Erica's voice. Its masculine gruffness speaks to me more than NYC's meatpacking district's drag queens. And it should since I'm the only one in the room! **Rebecca Swanner**

The Goodwill

That Was A Moment (Negative Progression)

That was a moment, wasn't it? Actually, it was a pretty quick moment, as in the first song on this record rocked in a way all The Goodwill's fellow Long Islanders (Brand New, The Reunion Show) would envy. Then the songs just got plain boring. Keep up the pace and energy and we'll have something. For now, this is just mediocre pop-punk done as so many others are doing these days... just not as good. The singer sounds like he needs his balls to drop and get some speech therapy. **Ross Siegel**

Grand Mal

Bad Timing (Arena Rock Recordings)

If you want points for originality at this point in rock history, it's best to focus on your delivery (See The White Stripes). Let's face it: If you're a band of five sleazy New Yorkers playing shamelessly indulgent pure rock songs about hot girls, marijuana, and livin' la vida loca, your options for ingenuity are going to be severely limited. Lucky for Grand Mal, they care very little for the exercise in futility that is ingenuity. They're perfectly happy playing around with sounds from '70's behemoths like The Stones, Big Star, and the New York Dolls. This M.O. isn't great for establishing a unique voice, but it's perfect for carrying on important rock traditions and delighting audiences that may (or may not) have missed these bands in their heydays. *Bad Timing* is a carefree romp through 11 solid rock anthems that don't bother with irony or cynicism- or even tricky production. The instruments (vocals included) come through with refreshing clarity and high energy. What's so great about being new when you can be having fun? **Erin Anderson**

Guitar Wolf

UFO Romantics (Narnack)

I'm not exactly sure what was in those

bombs we dropped on Japan during the last world war, but I suspect they may have been filled with Ramones and Chuck Berry 45's (although Rock & Roll had yet to be invented- a point we'll ignore in the name of poetic license) because in subsequent years our friends in the east have produced some seriously demented punk-ass rock bands. Case in point is Guitar Wolf. Boasting more grease than Mike Ness' hair before he lost it all, and clothed in enough leather to send PETA members into an epileptic seizure, Guitar Wolf have appropriated punk and rock & roll, married the two and come up with a hybrid the Yeah Yeah Yeah's Anglo asses could only have wet dreams over. I have no idea what the hell these guys are saying, save for the occasional English expression thrown in for effect, but I suspect it has something to do with hot girls, cheap booze and cheesy sci-fi. On a side note: all song titles appear to be written in the Japanese-American hybrid known as Engrish. Now that's what I call hardcore fuck-punk-rock-sex-ultraviolence! **Aaron Lefkove**

I Farm

Is Lying To Be Popular (Go-Kart)

I really could not possibly give less of a damn about William Shatner, even if I wanted to. The reason that anyone could ever care about what that guy does with his life is certainly a mystery to me, as is the reason why I Farm would write a song about him. I'm not quite sure whether I Farm are Shatner fans or not, and to tell you the truth I can't really tell much about what they stand for at all. This is the kind of music that other reviewers like to call "politically charged" because it addresses things like the Great Leap Forward in China and other stuff that I was busy trying not to learn while I was in high school. Aside from the politics, this CD is not bad musically. It sounds like a punk band with a really bad head cold and a lead guitarist who had never heard the songs until they got to the studio. The tempos are fast and the vocals are raspy enough to make me believe that these guys really are upset about something. However, I think that I'll stick to listening to Propagandhi's *How to Clean Everything* when I'm in the mood for politically charged punk rock, but if you like blowing lines of Ritalin off of your history books then I Farm is your band. **Stan Horaczek**

Intro5pect

(A-F Records)

Some things in life are better if they are not mixed together. Electronica and political street punk are among the list. I can totally sympathize with the band's yearning to spice up the traditional recipe for street punk and Oil, but the accompaniment of a drum machine and synthesizer seems to only complicate their sound. Intro5pect's blend of punk with, samples and break beats can best be compared to the digitally fast paced hardcore of Atari Teenage Riot and the dance laced punk of The Transplants. Don't get me wrong, electronica can be a beautiful thing, but only as its own entity. I have to give these guys credit for actually singing

about something though. Their songs raise such issues as social inequality, capitalism, and gentrification. The political content coupled with the Oil style sing alongs will make you want to chuck a molotov cocktail at the windshield of a police car. The eighth song "Conditioned Reaction" is the prize cut of the album. Its historical references to "a cannon through the wall at Antietam or the army through people in Tiananmen" makes this track great food for thought. Look into this if you usually follow the instructions that Anti-Flag gives you. **The Goon**

Kaada

Thank You For Giving Me Your Valuable... (Ipecac)

This is most likely the most out-there and off-the-beaten-path record that will be reviewed in this issue. What else could one expect from Mike Patton's Ipecac Records and its roster of unusual bands? It defies all genre laws the way Frank Zappa did in the 60's with its ability to drift into its polar opposite at the drop of a hat. The songs here range anywhere from Doo-wop to trip hop and all points in between. For those punk kids out there who don't know the difference between drum 'n bass and big beat, (myself included), these guys actually made me care. I'm not sure if it's break beats or jungle that they're playing, but any way you cut it they're awesome. The vocals are eerie melodies that sometimes have no actual words and just follow the patterns. This is *not* a punk or indie record. It's just music, in the most general sense. Just music. No facades are apparent when listening. If you like anything related to Mike Patton in any way, then this is definitely for you. He paid for it and put it out on his label. He's no dummy and neither are the members of Kaada. **Jeremy Curtin**

Lagwagon

Blaze

(Fat Wreck Chords)

Given the fact that Lagwagon had five fucking years to complete *Blaze*, you'd feel compelled to deduct points from the onset simply for taking so damn long. After all, it'll be sitting on the same store shelves next to other albums that were cranked out within the acceptable two-year album creation cycle. But even with a heaping stack of demerits already in the bag before the needle hits the groove, *Blaze* is an exemplary product of what experience and countless exercises in superior songwriting can formulate. Vocalist Joey Cape's decade-plus participation in the 'Wagon has done nothing but continually refine his insane knack of double-timed pop-punk prowess. Harking closer to the band's second and third albums, *Trashed* and *Hoss* respectively, *Blaze* ditches many of the embellishments found on the band's later material (much of which was re-directed into Cape's other band, Bad Astronaut, anyways) and gets straight to the point with a set of 14 no-bullshit tracks that are quintessential and unequivocally Lagwagon. From the intense rhythm change-ups of "Falling Apart" to the massive, keenly-produced backing vocal sing-alongs of "E Dagger" *Blaze* is simply on fucking fire.

There Must Be A Way To Stop Them (Volcom)

I think Volcom has finally found its breakthrough artist. The Denver six piece have created a style that combines the post hardcore sound and mainstream appeal of Glassjaw, At The Drive-In and Quicksand with the soulful rock and roll of The Cult. Having put out two releases on their own dime, Vaux has given each song nothing but adrenaline. In a time where most bands over-saturate their songs with the use of a keyboard, Vaux has found a way to use it sparingly, yet effectively. Much like Deftones crooner, Chino Moreno, frontman Quentin Smith possesses the vocal talent of casually mellowing you out and then waking you the fuck up. I haven't had the privilege of seeing these guys live, but rumor has it they incorporate fire breathing and lighting effects into each show. All I know is if their show is half as good as this CD, then we are in for a big treat. Something tells me that that we will be hearing a lot of noise from Vaux this year. Don't sleep on it, cop this album today. **The Goon**



Now, do we have to wait another goddamn half-decade for another dollop of sheer brilliance? Let's hope not. **Waleed Rashidi**

Lickgoldensky

The Beautiful Sounds Of (Escape Artist)

I've said it before and I'll gladly say it again, Lickgoldensky are the most brutal hardcore band to roll off the New Jersey Turnpike since Deadguy unleashed their demented *Fixation On A Co-Worker*. Finally someone has crafted the perfect accompaniment to that most pleasurable of Sunday drives down the turnpike where they have those oil refineries spewing flames 100 feet into the air (anyone who has ever made the drive knows exactly what I'm referring to—it's like a scene from a Mad Max movie). Combine erratic and spastic riffing that is equal parts Slayer as it is Rorschach, Deadguy, and Kiss It Goodbye over vocals that make Brutal Truth sound like the Get Up Kids and you're on the right track. Warning: this CD is for those who like their hardcore free of fashion-core posing and whiney "emotional" vocals. **Aaron Lefkove**

The Locust

Plague Soundscapes (Anti)

I've always had respect for the Locust. I've always had an understanding of the point that the Locust are trying to get across. I own many of their releases—yet I find them to be one of those bands that you end up liking not for their music but for what they are. Now there's nothing wrong with that, and songs like "Halo of Pubic Hair" and Earwax Manufactured For The Champion In All of Us" and "The Half-Eaten Sausage Would Like To See You In His Office" make me remember why I think these guys are genius, but I can only take grindcore in small doses. Good thing this CD clocks in at a mere 23 minutes. Twenty-three minutes that grind, slam, chomp and mangle with jagged, chainsaw rhythms, gravel vocals, and more high pitched squeals than a whip-it binge! If you love these guys' brand of synth-driven grind then you won't be disappointed. If you're suffering from constipation I have good news, this is music to lose your shit to, quite literally. Now if you'll excuse me I must go clean myself up. **Aaron Lefkove**

Mae

Destination: Beautiful (Tooth & Nail)

I'm almost tempted to skip this review and move onto another record. It's not that this isn't good music. On the contrary, Mae play tight, professional, sweet music that lulls the listener into a trance and then holds them there for another 45 minutes. The problem isn't in Mae's execution. The band writes good tunes that give any Pro-Tools terminal a workout in compression and equalization techniques (remember back when all music was warm, raw, and analog? So do I.) But that's just the problem: Mae play music that is so precise and saccharine sweet that it's almost sterile—like a robot playing emo. The emotion simply is not anywhere to be found.

Meanwhile, a band like Thursday or Death Cab For Cutie, both bands in the same hemisphere as Mae, might lack the polish, but what they lack in acutely manicured guitar tones and drum-fills, they more than make up for in pure visceral sincerity and raw feeling. Maybe it's the cynic in me talking—because Mae are admittedly very good at what they do—but I see exactly what Mae is trying to accomplish and all I can say is that bands like Jimmy Eat World, Death Cab For Cutie, and Further Seems Forever do it much better. **Ross Siegel**

Matchbook Romance

West For Wishing EP (Epitaph)

Like fellow upstate New Yorkers, Autopilot Off, Matchbook Romance got signed and decided to release an EP instead of a full length album. The five song demographic-teaser is a combination of screamo and easy to digest pop-punk. The mixture of crunchy guitars behind tightly matched screams followed by soothing vocal melodies might make this Epitaph's answer to Thursday. Bad Religion guitarist and Epitaph owner, Brett Gurewitz even went as far as lending his production skills to the EP. Like most things that are thrown into the marketplace, only time will tell if these guys will stand out from all the newfound upstarts who just started playing the style last week. **The Goon**

Minus The Bear

Highly Refined Pirates (Suicide Squeeze)

This band features a veritable who's who of underground Seattle rock and roll (members of Botch, On Alaska, and Kill Sadie fill out the lineup) and the buzz on them is huge. Recent tours with Pinback, Cursive, and Engine Down have clearly put them in with the right company. I hear Engine Down's off-kilter, edgy timing; Pinback's sense of quiet, calm melody; Cursive's use of subtlety and energy in all of this. If you're expecting more metal bone-crushing riffs from Dave Knudson's guitar, you're barking up the wrong tree: there's no Botch in this bush. Instead, Minus The Bear are a calm, complex, and relaxing journey through the Sub Pop back catalog that utilizes digital effects and drum loops, soft crooning, and drumming that seems to move all over the kit. Honestly, this is a bit boring, and when looking for relaxing rock and roll I doubt I'd pick this out of the CD wallet, but if you have a chance to catch them live do so... they show up better in person than they do here. **Ross Siegel**

Motion City Soundtrack / Schatzi

(Doghouse/Redemption)

The pairing of the Midwest's Motion City Soundtrack and Schatzi ends up as a collaborative effort between the bad and the worse. We'll start with the lesser of the two evils: MCS' pop-laden tunes land rather close to the vicinity of the Get Up Kids' *Four Minute Mile*-era compositions, but without the decidedly proficient edge that gave the Kids their charm and character. Instead, MCS end up appearing as emo retread—

complete with requisite muddy guitar tones and garish Moog synths that come across as utterly obtrusive and well, quite bluntly, fucking annoying. Texas' Schatzi fare worse: sloppy arrangements, languid vocals and guitar tones that sound like someone ripped off the Edge's effect pedals. Their first offering on the split, "Coreopsis," makes an ungainly mad dash into double-time as a haphazard outro and the remaining pair offer no redeeming value—particularly the band's embarrassing cover of Journey's "Any Way You Want It." Instead of doling out the cash for recording production and replication, Doghouse and Redemption would've been better off splurging on lessons for this pair of merely mediocre ensembles. **Waleed Rashidi**

The Movielife

Forty Hour Train Back To Penn (Drive Thru)

I'm surprised to say this because I always thought this Long Island punk band wore their influences right on their sleeves without any shame or remorse, but this is a damn good record. I am pressed to find a song on this disc that isn't tight, punchy, succinct, and catchy as hell. The chorus to the second song, the title track, will sink into the most remote reaches of your subconscious like a knife through warm butter. The instrumentation is sparser than on most records of the same genre—of which there are many these days: just aggressive enough to fall into the hardcore world, enough hooks to land a spot on MTV2's video rotation—in that there are no solos of any kind, very few guitar harmonies, but rather a band intent on steaming full speed ahead with only one purpose. That purpose, you may ask? To let the vocals shine, the instruments provide a solid groundwork, and rock the crowd into a helpless frenzy. And, if you've ever seen The Movielife live you know they aim to please. **Ross Siegel**

Narcissus

(Abacus/Century Media)

This whole screaming/singing craze really pisses me off. Not only do I not believe it for one hot minute, I also do not think it works entirely well. At least I haven't heard it work all that well—not well enough for it to be a staple song-writing choice in hardcore and metal, anyway. So, Narcissus screams and sings, yes. Forgive my cynicism here: it sounds to me as if Narcissus, and the countless other bands playing this style, are desperately trying to broaden their fan-base, or appeal to the mainstream, or not confine themselves to a solely hardcore audience, or whatever other lame excuse these bands today make to justify their existence as a hardcore band. I have no definitive formula a band must follow to be "hardcore." I don't care about that crap. Here's my main gripe: Narcissus is straight from today's cookie cutter, and I just don't like that kind of cookie, and I don't believe it is a very sincere cookie either. Me? I need true substance, not just a catchy vocal melody sandwiched in between mosh breakdowns. Personal biases aside, Narcissus are an average band, occasionally touching upon moments

that work. There is a world of room for growth. They need to take that advantage, break the cookie cutter mold, and come into their own sound. **Joe Vespa**

The New Pornographers

Electric Version (Matador)

The New Pornographers are back with a pop masterpiece. A rock and roll extravaganza that brings together such influences as The Cars, The Beach Boys, and maybe even Belle and Sebastian. The recording is so clean you could eat a cheese omelette off it. The guitars sound as if they were painstakingly laid down to tape by virgin maidens dressed in white; the keyboards are aptly placed and add a touch of innocent, upbeat sensibilities that would make Rick Ocasik proud; and the vocals are the perfect blend of Brian Wilson polish and Built To Spill-esque soulfulness. The melodies here are all angular, so perfectly placed and executed that one gets the feeling these guys would fail miserably if forced to improvise a guitar solo or something (of which there none). Thankfully, this is pop music, and there's just no room for spur-of-the-moment, fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants imagination involved. Nonetheless, this is a fun and feel-good record. **Ross Siegel**

NOFX

Regaining Unconsciousness EP (Fat Wreck)

In punk rock there's a huge emphasis on being positive. With cries for unity everywhere and even a style of hardcore called "posicore" it's funny when you run across a band that seems to always have negative news to report. NOFX means a lot to many of us. Their records were some of the first independent releases I owned and I'm sure I'm not alone out there. But when you really look closely at Fat Mike's brainchild... it's pretty fucking negative stuff. Mind you, Mr. Mike always seems to make it fun to whine, and whine away he does. On this EP's first track, "Medio-core," the band plays a tongue-in-cheek ditty bemoaning the glut of ordinary, average music flooding the airwaves. On "Franco Um-American" the band sheds tears over how hard it is to remain positive when people like Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and Michael Moore keep on writing about the horrors even a sweet, innocent superpower like the US of A inflicts upon the international community. Don't even get them started on animal rights! Seriously, though, NOFX seems bit trite to me these day. There's more intense music that I'm more interested in listening to, but you have to give NOFX a nod for being smarter, faster, and having far more of a social conscience than most other acts under the punk umbrella. For that, NOFX will always have a special place in my heart... even if this EP does not. **Ross Siegel**

Pink Anvil

Halloween Party (Ipecac)

Let me start off by saying that this CD

Haste reviews their new album

The Mercury Lift (Century Media)

Throughout the history of mankind there have been landmarks in the development of written and recorded music, Mozart's "Requiem," Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, even The Beatles' *White Album*. *The Mercury Lift* is nowhere near the auditory creation of the aforementioned but is nonetheless a really good record. It is amazing what a few boys from Alabama can do with a few months work and a modest recording budget. I guess if you had a few dollars to spend on some cheap thrills you could buy beer, or you could pick up this record. It bridges several genres of music but still maintains a level of continuity you might not find in most bands (or maybe you will). Haste really tapped into the melodic aspect of their writing this time, even more so than previous releases. Still, the level of heaviness expected from Haste is not forgotten. D. Randall Blythe from Lamb of God and Jeff Jenkins of CodeSeven even make guest appearances. In the grand scheme of musical genius *The Mercury Lift* is holding onto the tether as the boat of absolute brilliance sets sail into the seas of wonder, but all in all it is certainly worth the cash you'd pay to own it. **Kelly: vocals**



compensates for every annoying emo and pop-punk CD that I have ever or will ever have to review. Leave it to up to Paul Barker and Max Brody of Ministry to create music that's suitable for listening to while performing lobotomies. This eleven track live CD is a macabre sampling of creepy laughs, hypnotists putting patients to sleep, high-pitched organs, and crickets making noise. The more interesting parts of the songs seem as if they were taken directly from the sci-fi movies that were shown on the now defunct Comedy Central classic, *Mystery Science 3000*. The random samples and eerie effects remind me of some of the earlier material from sci-fi/surf rockers, Man Or Astro Man? It's extremely difficult to pick a favorite out of this lot of scientific utopia, but if forced to I would have to choose the second track. With its samples of Godzilla's war cries and musical interpretations from the original score, it is required listening. Once again, Ipecac has managed to manufacture something that nobody else would have the balls or sense to. So, be a pal and buy it. **The Goon**

Planes Mistaken For Stars

Spearheading The Sin Movement EP (No Idea)

I'm reminded of a joke:

Q: How many Hardcore kids does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: 10. 1 to put in the light bulb and 9 to argue about what kind of light bulb it is.

Every hardcore kid that I know has inevitably spent an indecent amount of time deliberating (sometimes heatedly) about what kind of music certain bands play. It truly is amazing how much time can be spent arguing the intricate differences between emo and screamo. I blame bands like Planes Mistaken For Stars and their non-uniform brand of aggressive music for many of these disputes. If I had to classify this I would just call it emo, and do so without shame. This is the kind of melodically abrasive hardcore music that most other bands wish that they could make, but just end up crying about. I'm not saying that this is my new favorite album or anything but the almost traumatic mix of singing and screaming on top of the waves of epic guitar riffs and thick drum beats make this well worth the few minutes it takes to listen to it. It's a solid EP, no matter what style of hardcore you call it. **Stan Horaczek**

Playing Enemy

Ephemera EP (Escape Artist)

Former members of Kiss it Goodbye continue on with this three song EP and showcase their unique brand of atmospheric and brooding hardcore. Sometimes unpleasantly discordant, and other times darkly melodic, Playing Enemy inertly beats the shit out of you. Where typically, hardcore bands aim to impact immediately and consistently, PE prefers to lurk and plot and scheme. They attack with a severe stomach virus rather than a shot to the head or blade to the neck. *Ephemera* is a solid offering of rhythm and anti-dance groove. It is well produced and brilliantly

executed. While definitely not for all tastes, Playing Enemy is a credible unit worth the attention you should pay. **Joe Vespa**

Pressure

Anthem EP (Uprising)

My god, what a dumb album title! A punk band calling their record *Anthem* is like a hip-hop band calling themselves "Flow" or a jazz band called "Swing." Anyway, if the late, great Joe Strummer had been Madball, Rancid, or Agnostic Front, he might have released something in the same vein as this EP with his Mescaleros. After previewing lyrics to songs with the intimidating titles "Anthem," "Bullet," and "Rise," I was naturally expecting hardcore reminiscent of New York's most infamous, or at least Cleveland's. Lyrics like, "You're always frontin' / Like you're so hard" or "I got a bullet for ya," simply whetted my appetite for some down-and-dirty thug-core. What did I get? Reggae, skate punk, and melody. Hardly something be found on a 25 Ta Life record. Nonetheless, this EP is a healthy dose of punk rock the way it is meant to be played; fast, loud and pissed off. I have to give props to the fourth track, "Bumbaclot," the Peter Tosh cover that they do a commendable job converting into a punk rock track. Check this out if you're searching for some good old-fashioned sing-alongs. **Frankie Corva**

Red Hot Valentines

Calling Off Today (Polyvinyl)

I'm sorry, I can't review this. The singer's voice is so utterly annoying that after enduring it for exactly one minute and forty seconds I had to shut off my CD player and go get some fresh air. Then I made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Then I sat down at my computer to type this review up. But my suffering is nothing compared to what the recording engineer Mark Rubel must have had to deal with after listening to take after take of singer/guitarist Jeff Johnson's ungodly nasal yelp, undoubtedly contemplating another form of suicide every time he heard the phrase, "Can we play that back again?" If he's still alive, this traumatizing experience undoubtedly ruined Valentines Day forever by association for Mr. Rubel, and, on top of that, the band didn't even have the tact to thank him in the credit— even though they remembered someone named Trevor "T-Storm" McCoy. **Lee Mellon**

Rise Against

Revolutions Per Minute (Fat Wreck)

This record may be the second in punk history (and Fat Wreck history) calling for revolution while at the same time featuring a '70s arena-rock classic, the first being Propagandhi doing a Cheap Trick song on their debut record. Go figure. Anyway, Rise Against have brought with them 12 anathemic hardcore tunes that surely leads every fan at one of their shows right out the door to burn down a local police station. Rise Against is tight, powerful, and honest,

mixing Gorilla Biscuits-style breakdowns with the melody and intensity of a band like Strike Anywhere. Although Tim's vocals may be a bit too high-pitched and whiney to work well with the blazing power-chords and drum gallops found here, the overall result is exciting. I wonder what this band could do if they were on a record label more closely associated with hardcore instead of skate-punk. Great stuff here. Oh yeah, their album name and band name are both amazing... extra points. **Ross Siegel**

The Rocket Summer

Calender Days (The Militia Group)

File this one under "overly dramatic relationship rock." Picture a Saves the Day show, legions of shirtless teenaged rock guys clinging to every chorus as if it was their last dying breath. There's also cute little rock chicks with cardigans, barrettes in their hair, and shirts that say something cute like "emo is for lovers." They watch from the back wall and some of them are smiling widely as their boyfriends jump on stage and make it to the microphone to release their woes with Bryce of The Rocket Summer. They snicker and try to understand the musical statement of female-worship that blares through the PA system. All is bright and the world is a shining rose. Then they turn 21 and start listening to Billy Joel. **Jeremy Curtain**

Rock Kills Kid

(Fearless)

Despite having the worst name this music journalist has ever had the privilege of writing about (Fearless Records' roster—Plain White Ts, Bigwig, Knockout, The Kinison—good bands, terrible band names), Rock Kills Kid come out with a bang on the album's opening track, a song that could be found on commercial radio just as easily as it could be placed next to some of the underground's bigger punk acts. Unfortunately, the pace and pulse of the record drops steeply after the first song. In their favor, at least half the songs on this album are not only catchy as hell, but admittedly quite original for a pretty tired genre. Sure the band sings about girls and lost love a bit too much, but then again what else is there for a pop-punk band to sing about? Politics? Surely not. I'm interested to hear these guys again when they grow up a bit more. **Ross Siegel**

Rufio

MCMLXXV (Nitro)

I'm offering a \$500 dollar reward to whoever told all these bands who sound like New Found Glory that if they threw in an Iron Maiden lick every once in a while then they were doing something original. Rufio is the latest in a slew of Thrice 41 copycats, but they lean more to the punk side of the equation than the metal one. Sure, they can play competently and the vocalist has written plenty of lyrics ambiguous enough for every high school guy without a date to relate to. Unfortunately, all the songs here sound like I've already heard them before

just with the parts rearranged. This just doesn't feel authentic at all. It sounds like 19-year-olds in Atticus T-shirts trying to play metal—which comes across as some of the most mind numbingly generic emo-core I've ever heard in my life. Let's hope their future stuff is better than this so they can live up to the hype. Or, better yet, let's just hope the band breaks up before they reach their next record. **Lee Mellon**

Rye Coalition

Jersey Girls EP (Tiger Style)

I fear for Rye Coalition's sake that this powerhouse of a rock band may have dropped the proverbial ball. These guys have been together for around 8 years and only recently have they decided to make the band their careers—only recently have they opted to give their outfit the personal attention it deserves. Unfortunately in all those years of getting together on college breaks and summer vacations to tour and release the occasional record—like the visionary *Hee Saw Dhuh Kaet* and *The Lipstick Game*, both on Germ Blandsten—the band may have failed to keep up with the times, thus letting other copy-cat acts pick up their slack. This New Jersey band has been blending Zeppelin and AC/DC inspired rock and roll better than all the Strokes/Hives/White Stripes wannabees could ever manage, but unfortunately Rye Coalition may have lost their opportunity to attain the same kind of notoriety that the latter three bands enjoy so much of these days. Instead, Rye Coalition brings you a seven song EP that is crude, lewd, gnarly, and raw... and it rocks. Bands like The MC5, Born Against, Zeppelin, and The Butthole Surfers are all references in Rye's music and the end result are the heaviest, most hard-hitting songs of this band's career. Yes, the band is awesome. No, they will never be played on MTV. You can count on that. **Ross Siegel**

Saturday Looks Good To Me

All Your Summer Songs (Polyvinyl)

Yawn. So this band's whole gimmick is that they mix indie rock with Motown. See, they're from Detroit and Motown originated in Detroit and just because they're twenty-something white kids... well, I don't have to tell you that this isn't a very good idea. Add the fact they can't sing in tune (especially on duets like the song "Ambulance") and the fact that they got everyone they know to play on this thing (31 guests total) and you get something resembling Conor Oberst and his orchestra if they listened to too much Smokey Robinson and never practiced. That's not to say that there aren't some striking moments here (see: "The Sun Doesn't Want To Shine"), but they're way too few and far between to buy this disc, let alone keep my free promotional copy. **Lee Mellon**

Shai Hulud

That Within Blood III-Tempered (Shai Hulud)

After a 5-year-plus drought of full lengths

Brand New reviews their new album

Deja Entendu

(Triple Crown)

Deja Entendu is the second full length release from the most charming band on the scene today, Brand New. My Band. And I'm going to let you in on a secret...ready? We have no idea what the hell we are doing. It would be nice that if when you learned to play an instrument, you also received some kind of inborn knowledge on how to write songs on that instrument. This is not reality, however. Writing songs is not something that we have read the manual on, and we are winging it. Completely. And it's working. Maybe. I don't know anything about reviewing records beyond me rambling on and on to my friends about the ones that I love. Actually I don't believe in record reviews at all. So, quickly, this is what I can say. This record was recorded in five weeks in North Carolina. Most of the songs, and all of the lyrics were written in a state of complete panic and desperation. We like to procrastinate...myself especially. Things have happened in our lives, things that have made us look at the world differently. We have been to new places. We have become better musicians. We have found new albums to listen to. We have broken off relationships. We have made new ones. We have been to other countries. We have missed our families. So now we wrote a new record, and when I listen to it I hear these things that have happened to us. This is really no kind of record review. But records shouldn't be reviewed. They should be listened to. **Jesse Lacey: vocals/guitar**



from this Poughkeepsie via Miami powerhouse, the Hulud is back with a showstopper of a record. To sum up on paper the complexity and dexterity found in Shai Hulud's music would be like drawing a diagram of a skilled Kung Fu master's movements and asking one to understand exactly what martial arts can be. However, while most metal bands are like a high-powered automatic assault rifle—riddling their human targets full of small, pea-shaped holes until the query's heart stops after keeling over, spitting out some blood and bile, and finally dying a few minutes later—that is not Shai Hulud. This band—a silent, but deadly force in the hardcore community that shuns fads, fashion, trends, and insincerity—prefers to catch you unaware, then drop one of those 15,000 lbs. "daisy-cutter" bombs they use to penetrate underground bunkers in Iraq and Afghanistan, which literally disintegrates everything with which it comes in contact, ripping your very atoms to shreds with one fell swoop. Some may criticize this record for being a bit unpolished compared to others in the genre, but you've got to ask yourself next time you're looking for a record in your local record store: do you want to die a slow and painful death, or be blown away. This record is totally worth the wait. **Ross Siegel**

Silverstein

When Broken Is Easily Fixed (Victory)

Keeping in line with Victory's recent signings of the more melodic and constructed, bands like Silverstein have redirected the public's perception of this once chugga-chugga-riff hardcore outlet from Chicago into a veritable roster that spans across the board of all genres of independent rock. Silverstein aren't anything remarkable, touting their tunes anywhere from Revelation Records'-based emo-rock classics like Sense Field, Gameface, and Farside to present-day Finch and Taking Back Sunday. There's nothing earth shattering, or even notable on Silverstein's latest. There's the typical cathartic oscillation between the traditional hardcore neck-bulging screams to the sweetened, melodic vocal lines. You'll find half-timed breakdowns in all the right places, harmonies that fit their respective positions and lyrics that run the cliché gamut of the personal and first-person. It's all rather formulaic, which at times may not be a bad thing, if the standard-fare formula fits your perception of how music should be produced. As inoffensive as water, vanilla ice cream or a Buick Century, Silverstein have assembled a very average collection of material. **Waleed Rashidi**

Solea

Even Stranger EP (Mileage Records)

Garrett Klahn, where have you been all this time? Just when I thought all the players in the late '90's emo boom were long gone (e.g. The Promise Ring, Mineral, Braid, etc.) Garrett Klahn, frontman for emotional-hardcore super group, Texas Is The Reason, returns with a new band. For those not familiar with TITR, they were the Beatles

of emo—they didn't invent the musical style by any stretch—but back in 1997 they might have been the biggest name playing in the genre we all love to hate. After a very underwhelming LP, they finally disbanded, with various members going on to Jets To Brazil and New End Original, while Garrett went on to front the great white hype that, thankfully, never amounted to much: New Rising Sons. Now, Mr. Klahn is finds himself in a California-based band with Sergio of Samiam/Knapsack fame. Solea's debut is catchy, raw, sincere, and comforting good (except for the fifth track, which sucks). They're sort of a mix between Jets To Brazil and something you'd find on what used to be called Modern Rock radio. This is simple and honest, unpretentious rock with emo tendencies. But, it's still not as good as Texas Is The Reason's first EP, though. **Ross Siegel**

Sorry About Dresden

Let It Rest

(Saddle Creek)

At their best, this Chapel Hill rock band—featuring Matt Oberst, brother of everyone's favorite boy with Bright Eyes—plays in a rootsy style drawing disparate influences like early pre-sucking Soul Asylum, not-as-drunk *Let It Be* era Replacements, and maybe even the more rocking sounds of Bob Dylan or one of the new-fangled garage rock bands that are so popular with the kids these days. At their worst, their songs wander, bore the listener, and are slightly annoying. Fans may know bassist, Matt Tomich, from his other band The Scaries and I much prefer them. When you really think about it, no one is even paying too much attention to Sorry About Dresden, though. Their rocking numbers—the ones that stay on track and don't get a bit too experimental—are inspired, fun, and catchy. But let's face it, if you're on Saddle Creek and not The Faint, Cursive, or Bright Eyes, is anyone really listening? Now that the record is over... I'm not. **Ross Siegel**

Sonny

A Temporary Residence (Fast Music)

Another pop-punk-emo band, another record that doesn't break any new ground. Sonny are five youths from the Boston area who are the newest band to not stick out in a genre which just doesn't offer a whole lot of new territory to stake out. This record has both plaintive whiny break-up tracks and 3-minute pogo-bouncy fun songs, and what pop-punk record would be complete without your "18 and just have-to-get-out-of-this-small-town" rockers? And they do an almost average job. However, in Sonny's defense, the words and energy behind the suburban teenage angst that spews forth from this full-length debut are a little more believable than most—after all, 40% of the band is still in high school—and the end product seems to be a little more earnest than that of some of the older bands out there. I'm willing to bet that more than a few listeners of this type of music would agree with me. Much like their heroes Saves the Day, these guys will improve as they get older and their sound matures. But I'm not sure this album

is worth your money. **Nicholas Powers**

The Sounds

(New Line)

I'm not sure if these guys and girl are supposed to look and sound just like Blondie or if it's just some sort of strange coincidence. Anyways these Swedes rank up there as being just about as fresh, exciting, and exhilarating as fellow countrymen ABBA, The Cardigans, and Ace of Base. **Aaron Lefkove**

Spatialfield

The Cloak And Dagger Club (Sinister)

Today is probably not the best day for me to listen to this secret society album. It's a collection of five well-crafted songs that are probably great to listen to while driving through Michigan woods at night, but not the best when sitting at a desk after a really bad day. The EP is full of tender guitar crescendos and sprinkled with dashes of hope. Spatialfield's lyrics don't connect with anything specific going on in my life but it's Mark's soulful voice and the melodies that bridge the gap between the somber Jets To Brazil and the slightly less melancholy Promise Ring that has me choking back the tears. **Rebecca Swanner**

Stairwell

The Sounds Of Change (Hopeless)

The sounds of what? Are you kidding me? What did the world do to deserve this? This isn't even on a major label, it's on Hopeless, a respected independent label. For shame! You see, after Rancid became famous they made the same record they would normally have made—*Life Won't Wait*—and it sold very poorly. Whereas, these days so many bands look punk—like Sum 41, Good Charlotte, American Hi-Fi, and the late Eve 6 and SR 71—but simply are not punk bands. Rather, they're pop bands with an edge trying to gain some cred by aligning themselves with the underground punk scene. In the early '90's music was saturated with hair bands, now those same people who would be in Poison cover bands are playing punk. Stairwell are poseurs, plain and simple. Their music is boring too. **Jeremy Curtin**

Statistics

(Jade Tree)

Statistics is the new solo project from Denver Dalley, whose previous claim to fame was being Conor Oberst's collaborator in Desaparecidos. On this 5-song EP, he oscillates between upbeat, driving pop with '80's-style hooks and synths, and down-tempo instrumental soundscapes that manage to be soothing yet have enough melodic structure to be much more significant than background music. Dalley clearly enjoys both the juxtaposition and fusion of different ideas and styles, both throughout the EP and within songs. This tendency manages to keep it all very interesting and results in such anomalies as nostalgic lyrics that are simultaneously

forward-looking and upbeat, and songs that meld the best parts of Depeche Mode and The Rentals, but wouldn't sound out of place in a Volkswagen ad (for those of you cringing, I assure you this is a good thing). This disc did piss me off in one way—the titles to the instrumental tracks are in parentheses, which may be a pretentious artsy thing, but has the consequence of cheapening or almost apologizing for these two songs. Instrumental or not, all the tracks on this CD have enough musical merit to deserve better. Recommended for fans of The Postal Service. **Nicholas Powers**

Strapping Young Lad

SYL (Century Media)

The promotional materials for the newest metal opera from the mind of SYL's Devon Townsend instruct the listener to proceed with caution. If you happen to require leather, make-up, and spikes with your extreme metal, then SYL may be a bit nerdy for your tastes. In the words of a friend, SYL's frontman, Townsend, resembles Michael Bolton after he had been dragged through the lowest reaches of hell armed only with a few Slayer tapes and a back issue or two of *Metal Hammer*. Still wire-rim glasses and male pattern baldness don't tend to go side by side in most people's minds with blast beats and bespectacled singers shrieking bloody-murder. SYL's music is straight forward, no frills, balls-to-the-wall metal that hardly lets up its operatic atmosphere for a second. Imagine Maiden times ten without the wanky solos or Cradle of Filth with a more political bent. Very cool stuff that adds some diversity to any record collection that's a bit heavy on the Modest Mouse. **Ross Siegel**

Suicide File

Twilight (Indecision)

After an EP that kicked the asses of unsuspecting listeners, Suicide File returns with their first full length. Like the many others that had their asses handed to them on the silver platter that was their debut EP, I too was happy to have my rear removed and given back to me courtesy of Suicide File. My ass was terribly excited to be obliterated again. Although the attack this time around seems slightly more subtle, *Twilight* delivers. This new full length kicks out some rockin' hardcore punk jams that hit hard. Fans of The Nerve Agents, Endeavor, or even The Circle Jerks will latch on tightly to the Suicide File. *Twilight* is agreeable to the ears found on most punk rockers, hardcore kids, and circle pitters worldwide. **Joe Vespa**

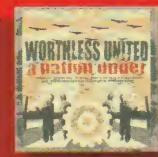
Swingin' Utters

Dead Flowers, Bottles, Bluegrass... (Fat Wreck Chords)

How interesting that a street punk and roll act from the east coast like the Dropkicks tend to wander into Celtic territory while their virtual counterparts on the left coast manage to keep it fast, angry and tight. I know that I'm leaning towards these San

A Nation Under (Now Or Never)

So here is the inspiration for some of the standout tracks on our new album. I wrote "I Am Nothing" during the 2000 elections and was just feeling alienated and out of place. I was working in the public school system and saw what was being valued over what should be and I thought to myself, "Fuck it, I really don't want to do this." The River City Rebels and Worthless United are a great combination. We met two or three years ago when we both opened for Catch 22. Within an hour there was nakedness, craziness, and urine. The next night we played up in their neck of the woods in a barn in this little town out in the sticks of Vermont. "Mr. Telephone Operator" is a nod to those guys. Dave wrote the lyrics to "On And On." He doesn't write much, but when he does I'm always impressed. I've known the guy for years and years now and every time he writes I'm like "where did he get this?" "A Nation Under" I wrote during that thing that was going on with the Pledge Of Allegiance and some Supreme Court ruling which came after the September 11th attacks, and the whole Enron scandal. A lot of people have told me that it's their favorite song on the record. Maybe they are just stroking my cock because I sing lead. **Zak: guitar**



DISCOGRAPHIES

Born Against: A Bunch of Albums About Class Wars (Kill Rock Stars) - Born Against are born again! Thanks to our friends at KRS, record collectors everywhere can get their fix of this legendary band. Also, due to KRS' efforts, a small microeconomic system based around eBay has been killed off. Born Against were one of the seminal forerunners of political hardcore in the early '90s. Born of the New York hardcore scene, the band's reputation seemed to grow exponentially due to their stark left wing politics and over the top live shows. Based around the volatile relationship of core members Torie Joy (later of Universal Order of Armageddon, Moss Icon and about 20 others!), Sam McPheeters (of Vermiform fame and Men's Recovery Project) and Brooks Headley (also of UOA and Young Pioneers), Born Against released one LP, one 10" EP and a plethora of next to impossible to find 7 inches during their 4 years together. These two reissues capture the band in all their outspoken political glory. *The Rebel Sound of Shit and Failure* collects all the band's 7" EP's on 1 CD (including the ultra hard to find Screeching Weasel split where each band exchanged songs and styles!) The other CD is comprised of the LP and 10". Not much in the way of extras, save for a few live pics and liner notes by McPheeters himself, but still a worthy addition for any hardcore aficionado. **Aaron Lefkove**

Testors "Complete Recordings 1976-79" (Swami) - The Testors are kind of like the unknown soldier of the New York City punk scene of the 1970's. While historians have written volumes on the Ramones and Johnny Thunders, they have all but forgotten about this legendary cult band who were a staple at venues like CBGB's and Max's Kansas City in their day. This 2 disc set manages to gather together all the Testors recorded material, 39 tracks in all, as well as some surprisingly high quality live tracks. Funny since the Testors' only official release was an impossible to find, *Killed By Death* classic 2 song 7". Detailed liner notes and a ton of old photos and flyers make this one a worthy reissue and finally do these guys some long overdue justice. Perhaps they were forgotten due to their mistrust of record labels, or perhaps it was due in part to their short lifespan. In any case lead Testor Sonny Vincent is back and to celebrate he's had his touring buddies in Rocket From The Crypt reissue everything he ever did. Pick this up, get zooded out, and discover a lost classic. **Aaron Lefkove**

JFA "We Know You Suck: 1981-1983" (Alternative Tentacles) - Now this is what's up. Alternative Tentacles has been working on reissues of '80s skate punk and this is the first one I've actually gotten. This band defined what it meant to be a skate punk act in 1981 and still remain doing their thing to this very day. And no, I don't mean skate punk like Blink 182-what skate punk used to mean was a kind of no-holds-barred punk/hardcore sound played by actual real-life skateboarders. Phoenix's JFA was the torchbearer for this sound. They were great musicians that would happily concentrate on tight surf songs as much as they would their token speedy snarling punk sound-rewriting a Bowie song and a Damned song as one track was one of their many tricks. This reissue contains their first two releases- *Blatant Localism* 7" and the *Valley Of The Yakes* LP as well as 12 bonus tracks. These tracks (5 live, 3 alternate versions, 4 unreleased) are the biggest selling point here. Packaging includes a full spread of show flyers, shots of the original band members skating and a host of great stories from Steve Caballero, Duane Peters, Jan

Francisco spitfires. The first track, "No Pariah," cuts to the bone with hard and fast punk that leaves no residue of influences. The next track keeps up the speed and venom and matches it with a hooky punk head-nodder. This act really seems to own the mid-tempo punk sound at this point, coming across as very honest and tight. Then an excellent moody track like "All That I Can Give" comes along and it sounds like they're playing a western version of The Specials' "Ghost Town." Surprising and very worth holding onto-I think this is the one that'll take the place next to *Streets Of San Francisco*, at least in my collection. **dup**

Sworn Enemy

As Real As It Gets (Elektra)

There must be something circulating in the water up near Queens, New York that makes the bands in that scene unbelievably tough. I made the mistake of keeping *As Real As It Gets* in my CD case with all of my other discs when I made a trip upstate for a visit. About an hour into my ride I opened my CD case only to find that it had beat up my emo CD's, violated my Copper CD and started a rather ferocious knife fight with my Blood For Blood disc. I've never seen a CD drink a forty before. When I listened to this for the first time I was expecting exactly what I got. The guitars are crunchy, the vocals are brutal in both content and delivery, and the breakdowns are of the variety that will make you grit your teeth and clench your fists as visions of mosh pits dance through your head. This release knows exactly what it is and who it's for. I think that this album is summed up best in its opening line, "Sworn Enemy/ From Queens, New York /Motherfucker!" I think it goes without saying, emo kids need not apply. **Stan Horaczek**

Ted Leo & The Pharmacists

Hearts Of Oak (Lookout!)

I'm going to lay it on the line here, Ted Leo deserves nothing less: Ted's last album, *The Tyranny Of Distance*, was better. That hopelessly overlooked debut solo outing by Mr. Leo, formerly of hopelessly underrated mod-rockers, Chisel, was easily one of the best rock/pop records of 2001. This record, while endlessly pleasing, is good, but where *Tyranny* soared in frenetic guitars, thumping bass, and Ted's delightful voice providing candy for the ears on every single track, some of the songs on this record are just plain throwaways. Listen, Ted Leo is a genius-he plays music in the style of The Jam/The Sweet better than those hacks in what is currently thought of as the "rock revival," and all his releases are superb. So if you like The Jam, The Sweet, Squeeze, and are looking for something a bit more original than what the Yeah Yeah Stroke Stripes have to offer, then go pick up all of Ted's stuff, from his early days in Citizen's Arrest right up to his solo stuff. Got it? **Ross Siegel**

Terror

Lowest Of The Low (Bridge 9)

Terror literally exploded onto the scene with a four-song CD demo (featuring one of the catchiest groove/dance riffs of recent times) and a performance at Hell Fest 2K2 that put hair on the chests of both girls and pre-pubescent boys alike. You have not seen less than five Terror shirts at any given hardcore show anywhere in the world since. Yeah, Terror kicks ass. No denying that. This debut album will undoubtedly be a staple in hardcore collections for years to come as *Lowest Of The Low* is exceptionally solid. If it is an album of anything, it is an album of no bullshit. Musically, for those not familiar yet, Terror plays up-to-date old-school hardcore with a brutal edge (albeit, not a straight edge). No, it's nothing new, but don't miss the point here, What is the point? Well, pick up *Lowest Of The Low* and let Terror speak for themselves. If you are looking for the next big trend or fashion statement, look elsewhere. Look to Terror for sincerity and aggression and a love for hardcore, pure and simple. Come as you are. **Joe Vespa**

The Thermals

Parts Per Million (Sub Pop)

I put this disc in my computer hoping and praying that it wouldn't sound like the same pseudo-Brit-pop that the music outlets have been trying to cram down my throat for the past couple of months. You can imagine my disappointment when all I got here was a band that sounds like The Strokes with far less catchy hooks and with a bullhorn instead of a microphone. I'm all for relentless eighth note patterns and three chord songs but less is not always more. People say that music paints a picture and the picture that this music paints for me is of semi-drunken white girls dancing together in front of a stage filled with skinny, black haired guys (or girls) wearing vintage clothes that they paid way too much for. I hate to say it but I think that in the near future these guys are going to have to change their name to The Band That's Going To Work At Starbucks Forever. This is music for college kids and people that are a little to old to be punks. If you're going to listen to music like this just listen to The Strokes, at least they have a real microphone. **Stan Horaczek**

Tomahawk

Mit Gas (Ipecac)

Tomahawk is a self-proclaimed supergroup, consisting of Mike Patton (Faith No More and Mr. Bungle among many other bands), and lesser-known ex-members of The Melvins, Helmet, and Jesus Lizard. In tried and true Patton/Ipecac form (think Lovage, Mr. Bungle, and Patton's manic collaboration with Dillinger Escape Plan,) Tomahawk are tight, professional, spastic, and quite inaccessible to anyone who would possibly consider what is being played on MTV worth checking out. And that's part of the point. Played slightly different Tomahawk's songs could easily be on the

more brooding, rock-based side of Bungle or Faith No More, but then, just when you think the music is going to turn towards a catchy hook, the meter changes, the texture shifts, and a drum machine kicks in, throwing off your preconceptions as well as your balance. Fortunately for Patton and Co., there are a lot of people who do not need their music to be at all predictable in any way. There are a lot of people who think that amazing grooves and guitar virtuosity is all one needs for a good time. I see exactly why those people would go crazy for Tomahawk. However, there is a time and a place for all good music and that time certainly has nothing to do with listening to this on a stereo. But, if Tomahawk happens to play live near me, by all means I'll mosh my heart out. **Ross Siegel**

The Trouble With Sweeney

I Know You Destroy (Burnt Toast Vinyl)

This CD is fucking brilliant. This band features the songwriting of Joey Sweeney, who used to be in a band called The Barnabys, and his brother-in-law, Heyward Howkins. By the end of this CD, you will wish these guys from Philly were part of your family too. Musically, it's pretty straightforward, distortion-free indie rock with a mild alt-country twang and a late-'60s pop influence. Sweeney's lyrics are smart without being contrived, playful without being silly, and occasionally sad, but never mopey, the type that all but the most cynical will be able to relate to; and his voice lies pretty much smack dab in the middle of the Jeff Tweedy- Conor Oberst spectrum. The understated production, occasionally complemented by tambourines, harmonicas, and *Pet Sounds*-style backing vocals, lets the simple songwriting shine through. Throughout the CD, there is a familiarity that I kept trying to put a face to, but I finally realized it's just the unmistakable sound of quality- "The Biggest Mary in the Schoolyard" might be the best pop song I've heard in 2003. From the opener about the inevitability of a break-up to the snarled "I don't care" towards the end of the title track closer, *The Trouble With Sweeney* has produced the best CD I've reviewed this issue. **Nicholas Powers**

Those Peabodys

Unite Tonight (Tiger Style)

It's unfortunate that these guys won't ever be able to make it through a review without a reference to the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, because the half of you out there who absolutely loathe JSBE will never finish reading this, and these Peabodys- genuinely brash, irreverent, and raucous- don't have a hint of the contrived campiness that gives JSBE their bad rap (although, as with JSBE, "the blues" would be a total fucking misnomer). This is cocksure, beer-and-whiskey-drenched music from Texans who have probably always called their guitar an axe without the slightest hint of irony. Not that their guitars are their most important instruments- the testosterone their balls-out, sonic assault emits is far more important than their simplistic musicianship. The lyrics are

***Freya* reviews their new album**

As The Light Drains (Victory)

We went into this record with the intention of experimenting, in order to keep things interesting for ourselves. But there are only so many ways you can crunch on an E-chord. When there are melodic aspects to a song, the power of a breakdown comes across with a lot more intensity when it hits. That being said, our goal was to create something multi-dimensional and textural that would fit the lyrics. Lyrically, Freya is a departure from our previous band Earth Crisis. With this new band we are venting our sorrows and aggressions as well as celebrating and acknowledging the things that are beautiful in our lives. Scott wrote the majority of the music with Earth Crisis, *As The Last Light Drains* spotlights Erick's unique songwriting ability. Sonically, Freya is a mixture of metalcore and rock. Fans of *Slither* and *Last of the Sane* will be pleased with this release. It captures the same high energy of those two releases. If *As The Last Light Drains* has a weak point, it is that some people will be disappointed that it doesn't sound exactly like old Earth Crisis, but musicians evolve and this band should be taken for what it is, which is something new and different. All members of Earth Crisis in and out of Freya are true to their beliefs, [but] the lyrical topics deal with other aspects of our experiences. Now go out and buy it! Karl Buechner: vocals



stupid funny (and at times probably improvised) and the concept of art is totally absent, but one listen will give listeners that post-show sweaty feel that makes even whiny emo boys pound the drum parts out on their steering wheel and want to joyfully smash glass bottles. This CD is not groundbreaking or important; just one hell of a good time. **Nicholas Powers**

U.S. Bombs

Covert Action (Hellcat)

Is it bad that I still think it's cool that skate legend Duane Peters has a punk band? They've put out a bunch of records now but I can't see much difference between any of them. Peters still has this speaking/singing thing as his style, and the songs might reflect this as there's heavy backup vocals on this record. It's not bad at all, but there's not much in their style or approach that gives you any inkling that they're ever going to move beyond it. That's kind of unfortunate, because although this is a concept band of sorts, it is formulaic from the get go. Their '77 styled political punk songs are bright and fun to listen to, and I guess that is what sustains the fans. I have no idea what they were going after with the cover art, because it looks like a Photoshop nightmare by some 50 year old who thinks he's got a knack for visual referencing. By the way, I think it's pretty cool that skate legend Mike Vallely has a punk band too. **dup**

VIA

Black On Black: A Tribute To Black Flag (Initial)

Don't forget your roots! This compilation is actually the CD version of four separate limited run 7 inches released over the past year or a half by Initial, giving modern hardcore bands a chance to pay respects to the forefathers of the style. American Nightmare, Anodyne, Burnt By The Sun, Dillinger Escape Plan, Converge, Hope Conspiracy and several others each contribute a searing version of a Black Flag classic. From Dillinger's electro influenced "Damaged I & II" to Coalesce's sludge groove take on "Jealous Again" to Converge's chaotic "Annihilate This Week" each band uses only the basic chord progressions as a template, making each song into their own. Listening to this compilation it's interesting to see how far hardcore has progressed from its primordial roots to the sound we know today. One of the first, and still one for the best. **Aaron Lefkove**

VIA

Atticus... Dragging The Lake II (Side One Dummy)

I can only assume that the Atticus clothing company took the inspiration for their name from Harper Lee's classic novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird* and I think it's fairly appropriate. Like the novel, I only made it about two thirds of the way through this CD before I quit and found other, more interesting, things to do. Also I'm sure that this CD will be frequenting the backpacks of high school kids all over the country as soon

as they can get a ride to the mall to buy it. This release has all of the makings of a teenager's mix CD. A few of the unreleased tracks, like Lagwagon's "E. Dagger," are solid and make the CD's low price tag easy to deal with, but the majority of the songs are from bands with whom anyone buying this will already be familiar. If you're a huge Travis Barker fan then you'll be especially pleased to see that three of his bands (Blink 182, The Transplants, and Boxcar Racer) are all represented in this package. They don't call him the hardest working man in punk rock for nothing... come to think of it, they don't really call him that at all. So, if you happen to be at Hot Topic and you have a couple of bucks to spend then you might want to pick this up instead of that spiky bracelet or glow sticks, but otherwise, I wouldn't go out of my way to get it. **Stan Horaczek**

VUE

Babies Are For Petting (RCA)

This San Francisco band has thus far been best known for their brand of psychedelic rock, reminiscent of the drug fueled heydays of 1970's rock and roll excess. However, this effort is a little more straight-forward than some of their past releases in that it is a lot more cohesive and easier for any type of rock fan to digest. Longtime fans may find that the band has streamlined their sound a little with these five tracks. Perhaps the variance is in the way the music now mirrors the type of slick and catchy retro-garage rock that label mates The Strokes are so celebrated for. Their songs also tend to resemble what The Doors' more poppier and radio-friendly moments were all about: infectious melodies coupled with off the beaten path instrumentation. Vue have always been known for dripping with sexual implications in their song crafting and performance. That kind of classic rock star appeal is still apparent with this EP, and honey, I'm a firm believer that when it feels good, looks good, and sounds good— you really can't go wrong. **Celeste Tabora**

Waterdown

The Files You Have On Me (Victory)

Here's a follow up from this solid German act, their second release on Victory. Like *Never Kill The Boy On The First Date*, it's got a hard, dense metal sound but sees a lot more technical playing and increased melodies. Did the first record by these guys sound like this? There's backup vocals, atonal sounds, pinning harmonies, and an overall sense of tunefulness that corners its way through the maze of their hard playing and semi-choppy metal-core. This band includes sponsorship logos from Tama, Ernie Ball, Zildjian, MusicMan and Ampeg in the insert, and hey, one of the members even shares the first name of Helloween's drummer. But there's not half as much metal on this record as I expected. The sound has a Hum-like dynamic to it as well as an emo-informed quality (post-emo?), that lapses into rock in the same way that the much less aggressive Jimmy Eat World does. The vocals reach a very Ignite-like

level, with a chesty style that borders on nu-metal. Weird, but perhaps this band has elevated them self to the level where they're inching towards the mainstream. But there's something here that, despite my general Teutonic affinity, sticks: it might be the political hue to this act, or the way that their songs delicately skirt the modern metal sound in a way that I *don't* hate. In some cases, the worst records are those that are inconceivably weird; conversely, those that are the toughest to critique are often the ones, like Waterdown, that demand further investigation. **dup**

Whirlwind Heat

Do Rabbits Wonder? (V2)

This album reminds me of childhood. Cruising down Woodward Avenue, the main artery that beats from Detroit to its suburbs, music blaring in my tiny green Jetta, all the windows rolled down. Whirlwind Heat is a band from Detroit that sounds like they're from Detroit, unlike their producer, Jack White's band, The White Stripes. All the songs are named after colors ("Purple," "Orange," "Pink"), and amusing to us Michiganders since the state seems only to have one: "Gray," which is incidentally the album's last track. It's the album's schizophrenic nature that reminds me most of Detroit. The city pushes together ideas that usually wouldn't coexist in the same space: industrial and modern architecture, punk rock and electronica, riches and abject poverty. In that sense, *everything* is gray in and around Detroit. Likewise, the album integrates the speedy guitars and strained vocals of punk with an electronic avant-garde pretentiousness. As it flows from one song to the next it's difficult to make a distinction where one song ends and another begins, especially with the continuation of two effects that sound like an electroshock therapy machine and the music from Super Mario Bros. **Rebecca Swanner**

xDisciplex A.D.

The Revelation (Triple Crown Records)

This is by far the best-recorded work I've ever heard from xDisciplex A.D. The band's earlier efforts sounded poor, and were performed even worse. Based on previous experiences, truth be told, I wasn't prepared to enjoy this CD at all. Eleven songs later, here I am writing a favorable review. Those familiar with xDisciplex A.D. know that the band plays metal-tinted hardcore with breakdowns aplenty, a formula that has been maintained, and effectively executed this time around. Given the many goofy directions metalcore can wander off in, I am refreshed by the band's decision to keep their music focused and consistent. Kudos to xDisciplex A.D. for sticking to the guns they fire best, which in my opinion are some of the most suitable guns for the genre. Fans of Hatebreed and the like take note: *The Revelation* has something to offer. Old xDisciplex A.D. fans should immediately rush out and pick this up. As I said above, this is by far their best release to date. **Joe Vespa**

DISCOGRAPHIES

from the Vandals and Tim Kerr of the Big Boys among others. One can only hope that the rest of their catalog is on the way. **dup**

Stäläg 13 "In Control" (Dr. Strange) - A reissue of the 1984 release from this act, one of the bigger Hardcore (that's the Oxnard, CA skate/punk scene) acts, and in my opinion, the best of them all. The scene also produced the BYO act Aggression, but Stäläg has always been a bit of a mystery. This was their only album, and it's a shredder, to say it like a skater at the time might have. It's a quick thirteen tracks of raging, well-played punk with plenty of attitude to spare. There's a certain recording quality to Ron Baird's vocals that seem like slightly delayed effects but they result in a really dark quality to these songs- it's much like the vocals to The Faction, giving this a charming, if dated touch. They're something like an echoed bellow but they work perfectly, and the guitar work is excellent for the time and budget this must have been made with. This must be the best packaging that this album has ever seen- great full color, strong bold layouts with some flyers and live shots, full lyrics, 4 bonus tracks and updated thanks lists. This is one of 2 essential skate punk manifestoes this issue. **dup**

Steve Caballero Bandology "VOL. 1" (Sessions) - I can understand how it would have been difficult for Steve. He had to face one of the most difficult decisions that all too many of us have to ultimately make, whether to be a pro-skater or pro-musician. He had to decide whether to spend his summers on the Warped Tour skating or playing in a band. I can only imagine how difficult that must have been. In the end, he decided to stick with skating, but he left us with a bitchin' collection of music that he took part in creating. Steve played either bass or guitar each of the four bands that this album showcases. Each band that he participated in epitomizes the style of music that was popular on the west coast during their respective periods. Beginning in 1982 with The Faction (Black Flag-influenced punk rock) to Cure-inspired One Man Out to the grunge of Shovelhead to the mid-nineties pop punk style of SODA., it would be safe to assume that yes, Steve has lived it all. The most fascinating part about this whole CD is possibly the first bonus track in which Steve, like a weatherman of independent music, forecasts the coming of emo with the tender ballad "To Have And To Hold." While I understand that Steve may just be too good to be true, we should be thankful that we can all have a little piece of Steve's heart by purchasing this wonderful and inspiring compilation of his music. **Frankie Corva**

Trenchmouth "More Motion" (Thick) - Chicago's vastly overlooked Trenchmouth finally get a well deserved "best of" collection. Taking influence from everyone from Nation of Ulysses, Fugazi and the Bad Brains to name a few, Trenchmouth created a sound that forged hardcore/punk energy, soulful rhythms, and jazz and reggae phrasing into something entirely new and unique. Their influence can still be heard in the music of bands like At The Drive-In and the (International) Noise Conspiracy. For those unfamiliar with this obscure yet influential band, *More Motion* serves as a great introduction, highlighting the best songs from each of their four albums. As far as "best of" collections go, this one does a great job in conveying what these guys were all about, with lyrics, tons of photos and detailed liner notes by the band members themselves. Pick this up for another punk rock history lesson. **Aaron Lefkove**

Hometown Heroes

New York Taxi Service

Eternal damnation must involve waiting for a bus. I came to this conclusion in high school when I spent countless mornings stranded at the bus stop in my own personal hell. As I watched cars pass me by, I prayed that at least one driver would offer me a ride out of simple kindness. It never happened.

Six years later, those memories are still fresh. With a car at my disposal, I decided I would try to right the situation that repeatedly wronged me. The concept was simple: offer bus-waiting and taxi-hailing New Yorkers a free ride to anywhere they wanted to go. If I could help one of my frustrated bus-waiting brethren, or if I could convince one cynical New Yorker that there is such a thing as a free ride, I would be content. So on a recent Sunday afternoon, my bodyguard and I set off in my dad's '94 gold Saturn.

We began in the East Village at around 1 pm. I was driving, looking for potential rides, while my bodyguard was doing the asking. We fully

bombed in our first half-hour. Several men and women waiting for buses on 14th Street denied our innocent offer, even when we said that the ride was free. Although, I knew that if a strange guy asked me if I'd like a free ride, while a woman in the driver's seat peered over his shoulder, I'd probably see it as an invitation to join their cult of two, and refuse. People were alternately scared, speechless, and friendly as they rejected our proposition – including the guy waiting for the bus on 23rd Street with a huge bag of laundry, and the gentleman struggling with several big packages while hailing a cab. Around 15 people had no interest in a free ride.

Guys, girls, blacks, whites, trendsetters, yoga-class-go-ers, dweebs, dorks and morons all refused a free ride. I began to take it personally. When we passed the Port Authority bus terminal and lines of waiting taxis, I felt a kinship with my fellow drivers. I gave a cabbie a thumbs up and a knowing nod as we drove by.

"Hey you! Yeah you! Do you want a free ride?" I yelled at a young foreign boy taking a picture. He ran away without making eye contact.

After several more refusals in midtown, we headed towards Central Park. We were rejected too many times to count on the way up. I couldn't, for the life of me, remember why I had wanted to do this.

Near Lincoln Center, a little after 2pm, a middle-aged man with long, curly, soul-glo for the white man hair, smoking an expensive cigarette, accepted our offer. I'd become so used to being denied that I almost drove away. CATCH NUMBER 1!

Billy, a music producer for children's television shows, was waiting for his friend Don to arrive via city bus. They were heading to the Lower East Side, to somewhere we "may find interesting." How mysterious! We arranged a meeting spot across the street and I committed several moving violations to get there.

Don arrived around 10 minutes later. He was slightly older and bigger than Billy, wearing a baseball cap that covered his silver hair. We headed downtown with Don directing me. He kept leading me west although I knew we had to go

east. I followed Don's directions though, because I wanted to be a good chauffeur. He continuously called me "hon," saying, "You're a good driver – and I'm not going to say for a girl," but he might as well have.

"What's the craziest thing you've ever done?" my bodyguard piped up.

Don, a director/producer, said, "I once had baby chickens hatching every half hour in the backseat of my car for a commercial for Chase bank – in the middle of a snowstorm."

Billy was about to outshine Don on this one.

"You ever heard of Plato's Retreat?" Billy asked. He described a swinging night at the famous sex club when he and his girlfriend ran into porn star Ron Jeremy. She happened to have gone to high school with Mr. Jeremy, and Billy spent the night cradling his girlfriend's head while Ron ate her out.

This did not sway Don from continuing to talk. He was one of those lifelong-I-know-more-about-this-city-than-you-ever-can-and-I-need-to-prove-it-every-second-New Yorkers. On our longer-than-necessary trip, Don fancied himself a connoisseur of New York factoids. "Do you know who lives in that building?" he asked as we drove down the West Side Highway. "Do you know the story of this bar/club/restaurant?"

I cursed myself for following Don's directions. I was hot. I wanted these people out of my car. Billy sensed that my bodyguard and I were losing interest as Don became exponentially annoying. He tried to rein Don in but to no avail. The man could not stop babbling.

We drove through SoHo, where, it seemed everyone on the entire island of Manhattan had decided to go for a stroll.

It turned out that Billy and Don were going to the opening of the outdoor space of a Lower East Side bar. We passed on the invitation to join them, dropped them off, and marched onwards.

It was only 3:00 pm, but I was exhausted. I didn't want to be a quitter, but I sheepishly told my bodyguard that I thought we should call it quits. He agreed. We parked, walked around and stretched our legs. Mission accomplished—kind of.

Next time, I'm taking the Porsche. □

AFTERGLOW

With an ever-growing number of "reality" based programs taking over prime time and the oh-so-tasteful network executives at Fox and NBC, it has become hard to tell the difference between the real reality shows and those parodies they've been doing on Comedy Central. It begs the question: Are there rooms full of trained professionals or trained monkeys who come up with this crap? We posed a few reality TV based questions to our new New York friends, BILLY and DON, hoping they could shed a little light on the subject.

BILLY JAMES COBIN, music producer

What is your favorite reality show?

I don't watch them; reality is my favorite reality show. I'm not interested in other people's business.

What do you think of a show where people are set up by their friends to be brutally beaten, robbed, raped, etc. in front of a hidden camera watching? In return they get their 15 minutes of fame.

I believe Shannen Doherty's new show is like that, so it's already been done.

DON, assistant director

What is your favorite reality show?

I have none. I don't watch them. I think the idea that Joey Buttafuoco wants one is a good idea. I read that in *The Post*. Somebody could make a lot of money from that.

If you could come up with a reality show what would it be?

I just gave you one no one's doing: It's a great idea. People are fascinated by this media pig who owns a body shop. Hey, why don't you ask me something about me? You have a producer here who's done a lot of great work. What do I care about reality shows?





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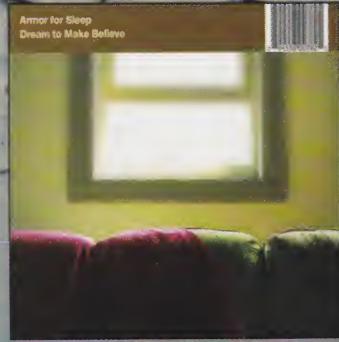
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